

WILD WEST WEEKLY

A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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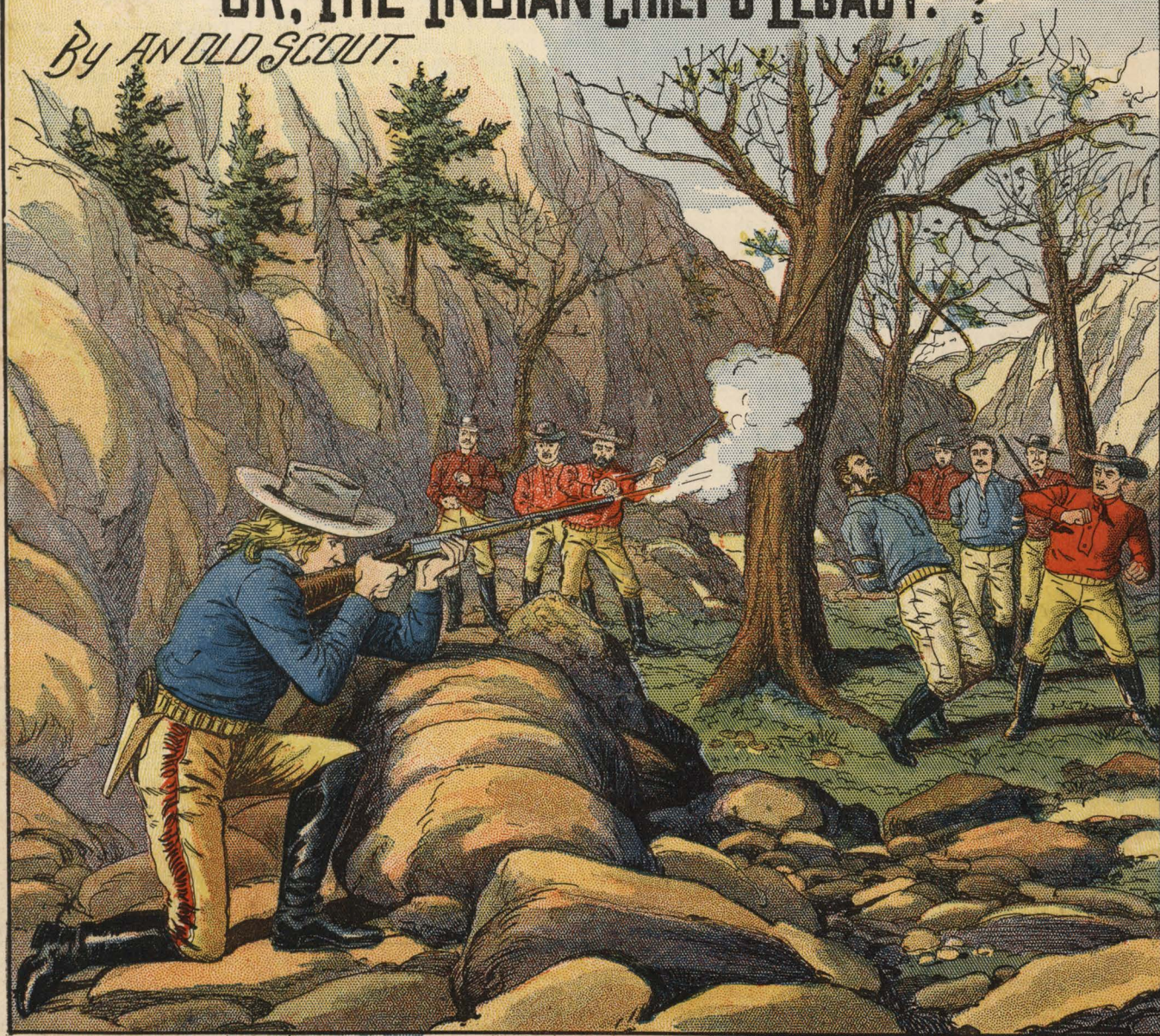
No. 7.

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 5, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST'S SURPRISE; OR, THE INDIAN CHIEF'S LEGACY.

By AN OLD SCOUT.



But Young Wild West already had his rifle leveled, and when the rope tightened about the neck of Charlie it cracked. It was certainly a remarkable shot, for the lariat was severed a foot above the scout's head and the sudden release caused him to drop to the ground.

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OR,

The Indian Chief's Legacy.

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CHAPTER I.

THE MAIL COACH IS HELD UP.

A group of five young men, whose ages ranged from eighteen to thirty, stood watching a number of carpenters who were at work putting up a big platform at the foot of a perpendicular cliff, about a mile from the central part of the hustling little mining town of Weston.

They were apparently much interested, and they chatted and nodded approvingly as the work continued.

The handsome young fellow with the wealth of chestnut hair, in the center of the group is Young Wild West, who had been nicknamed the "Prince of the Saddle" because no one in all the great West had ever been able to ride and master a horse as well as he could.

In addition to this, Young Wild West was an all-around athlete, being most cool in the time of danger, as daring as any hero who ever bestrode a horse or handled a shooting iron, and just reckless enough to make himself admired by every one who knew him, even his greatest enemies.

His costume was rather picturesque, as was that of his companions. Young Wild West was rigged out in fancy riding boots, buckskin knee breeches trimmed with scarlet fringe, yellow silk shirt and white sombrero.

His belt and holsters were mounted with silver, and the pair of shooters and hunting knife he carried were of the latest pattern of the times.

There was one young man in the group who was attired in what might be termed semi-western style. This was

Walter Jenkins, the superintendent of the Wild West Mining and Improvement Company.

Though he liked the country and people he had come to live with very much, and was anything but a coward, he did not hunt up danger, as he declared his employers sometimes did.

The other three were Jim Dart, the secretary of the company; Cheyenne Charlie, the scout, and Jack Robedee, who had also been a scout in the employment of the Government.

But it is more than likely that the reader has become thoroughly acquainted with the five before this, so no further description of them will be necessary.

The Wild West Mining and Improvement Company had decided to give an open air dance on their extensive piece of property, and that was why the platform was being built.

Wild had been over to Spondulicks the day before and saw to it that there would be a good puff in the paper when it came out Saturday, so there was sure to be a large crowd at the dance in addition to the regular residents of Weston.

Wild never did anything by halves, and he made up his mind that there was going to be more people in Weston the night the dance took place than there had ever been before.

Jack Robedee, who had fallen in love with a widow over in Devil Creek, was perfectly willing to go over to that place and advertise the dance for all he was worth.

"Have you decided what night to have ther shindig?" asked Robedee of Wild.

"Well, I should think these fellows would have the platform done by to-morrow night, so we can have it take place

next Wednesday. To-day is Friday, and we want a little time to get things ready," was the reply.

"That's right," nodded Jim Dart. "Wednesday night will be just the time to have it."

"I am glad it is decided," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, as he twisted his handsome mustache in a dandified manner.

"Why?" asked Walter Jenkins.

"Oh! I'll have time to practice a little, you know. I ain't had a good dance since I was in Texas last summer at a fandango. I could sling as light a foot as any of them, but I s'pose I'm all out of practice now."

"Well, I don't believe much in dancing, but I suppose I will take a hand Wednesday night with the rest of you."

"Of course you will," spoke up Young Wild West. "We will have a square set of our own—you and your wife, Charlie and his wife, Jim and his girl, and myself and Arietta. I am no dancer myself, nor do I ever expect to be; but on this occasion I mean to do my best."

"I won't have a chance to get in that set, then?" spoke up Jack.

"No; not that one," laughed Wild. "We'll get up another one for the benefit of you and your widow over at the Creek."

This caused a laugh from all hands, and Robedee turned a deep crimson.

He had always been termed a "woman-hater," but had at last lost his heart to a widow.

"When does the wedding take place, anyway, Jack?" queried Wild.

"When does yours take place?"

"That isn't answering my question; but I will answer you by saying truthfully that I don't know when I will be married."

"Well, I don't, either, then."

Jack spoke as though he was somewhat nettled, and his four friends only laughed the more.

"It is time the mail coach got here, I should think," observed Jenkins, changing the conversation. "I am expecting a letter, so I guess I'll walk down to the post-office."

"I'll go down with you," said Wild, so the two left the scene of the platform building and walked toward the heart of the town.

As they crossed the trail that led over the mountain to Spondulicks, they halted and looked to see if the stage coach was anywhere in sight.

"There she comes!" exclaimed Wild, pointing to a cloud of dust in the distance. "The driver is behind time, and he is trying to make it up, I guess."

"That is it, most likely," nodded Jenkins. "We will wait here till she comes in."

Half a minute later both could see the hurrying outfit pretty plainly.

Suddenly Wild noticed that there were only three horses to the vehicle.

"Something is wrong!" he exclaimed. "One of the leaders is gone."

His companion nodded, and then shrugged his shoulders significantly.

It occurred to him that there had been a hold-up.

Young Wild West thought the same thing, but said nothing just then.

Meantime the stage coach was rapidly nearing them.

The driver, who was handling the reins with but one hand, drew up when he saw the two waiting for him.

"What's the matter?" called out Wild.

"A hold-up!" was the reply. "Two passengers shot an' ther mail gone!"

"The dickens you say!" and Wild jumped into the vehicle, followed by his companion, and rode on over to the post-office.

There had been but two passengers to start from Spondulicks, and one of them was dead and the other pretty badly wounded.

The latter our friends learned as soon as they got into the stage coach.

The driver had been shot in the left arm, and when he brought the horses to a standstill in the little square, a crowd immediately gathered about him.

It was the first time there had been a stage coach robbery in that section in over a month, and they were anxious to learn how it happened.

"Whites or reds?" queried Wild, after he had turned the wounded passenger over to the only doctor the town boasted of.

"Both," replied the man. "It happened right over where Rob Runner's gang got wiped out that time."

The young Prince of the Saddle was very much interested.

"Ever seen any of the whites before?" he asked.

"Nope! Strangers, every one of 'em. Ther reds was Sioux, I guess, though I didn't have much time to look at 'em. We put up a stiff fight, but got ther worst of it. There was more'n a dozen of 'em."

"Boys," said Young Wild West, turning to the crowd of men, which now numbered easily thirty or forty, "we have got to wipe this gang out!"

"That's right!" cried old Sam Murdock, the postmaster. "We can't tolerate this kind of business here in West-ton. Here ther mail is gone ag'in. I'm putty sure there was twelve hundred dollars in money in it, 'cause I heard ther feller what's buildin' ther printin' office say that he expected that amount in a letter any day now."

"Too bad!" said some one else, and then all hands united in swearing vengeance on the gang who had committed the crime.

"Well, boys," said Wild, "the best thing we can do is to start right out and see if we can't run the hounds to cover. It may be that they have got a hangout somewhere up on the mountain, and it may be that we could find it. I am going just as soon as I can get any horse."

That was quite enough. A score or more of the men started for their horses.

Young Wild West hurried back to his headquarters, and

telling Cheyenne Charlie and Jack Robedee what was in the wind, made for the stable.

Spitfire, the beautiful sorrel, was saddled and bridled in short order, and when Wild rode over to the trail, Charlie, Jim and Jack were right behind him.

They were in time to overtake about twenty of the miners who had set out to be revenged upon the white renegades and Indians for holding up the stage coach and robbing the mail-bags.

"Young Wild West will lead ther way!" cried a brawny miner. "He's ther only one as kin lead us to victory!"

This was answered by a cheer from all hands, and then the posse of horsemen rode up the trail, sending up clouds of dust.

It was shortly before noon, but not one of the determined men thought about waiting to get dinner; they thought only of what they considered their duty, which was to rid the earth of the villains they hoped to find.

Wild knew perfectly well that the outlaws would not be apt to be found on the trail, but he had an idea that they might have a secret headquarters not very far from it.

There were so many caves and places that were just suitable for secret hangouts that it was more than probable that it would be years before the mountains would be given up by such bands of lawless men.

True, Young Wild West had wiped out more than one gang since Weston became a town, but there were new ones forming all the time, and it was necessary to be on the lookout all the while for danger.

This new gang that had just operated so successfully on the mail coach, was a surprise to the good citizens of Weston, but they were just as anxious to wipe it out as they had been for any that had preceded it.

About two miles up the trail the way was pretty level for a long distance.

The trail, which was now beginning to be quite a road, wound around the side of the mountain, and finally brought up into Spondulicks, fifteen miles from Weston.

About half way between these two towns the trail switched off and ran on till it came to the open prairie beyond the foothills.

This was the quarter where most of the rough element came.

True, there were any number of bad men and desperadoes who came by the way of Spondulicks, but they were mostly professional in their way, and could be more easily managed than the villainous renegades who had been driven from their regular haunts, and rode over the prairie until by design or accident they struck the trail that led into Weston.

Our friends soon reached the place where the hold-up took place.

The carcass of a horse laid on the side of the road, but that was all there was to show that there had been a fight.

If any of the attacking party had been killed the bodies had been carried off.

Wild dismounted, and made an examination of the ground.

It was quite sandy in one place, and he soon noticed foot prints made by moccasined feet and heavy cavalry boots.

That was all he could discern, so he concluded that there had not been more than two of the scoundrels who had dismounted—a white man and an Indian.

There were plenty of hoof prints, but they did not signify anything.

"The robbing was done by a red and a paleface, boys," said Wild. "The shooting was done from horseback, and then two men got off and took charge of the spoils. That makes it look as though the whites and reds had not quite come to an understanding yet, otherwise there would not have been one of each to take charge of the booty. This makes it appear to me that the gang is a newly organized one. This is probably their first start in business. Now, then, the thing is to find where they are."

The daring young fellow had scarcely uttered the words, when a rifle cracked from a point off to the right, and a bullet whizzed past his head.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "They are closer by than we expected. Charlie, did you see where that puff of smoke came from? There is some one there who wants my scalp, I guess."

Wild had himself seen the smoke curling upward from a point about two hundred yards distant, and when Cheyenne Charlie pointed out the exact spot he was sure he had made no mistake.

"Just hold my horse, one of you, and wait here till I come back, unless I shoot, when you will know I am in trouble, or have laid one of the scoundrels low. I'm going to try and creep around and get a look at the place where that shot came from. You had better get behind that bend in the road over there a trifle, or one of you might get winged. There is no telling what kind of shots there are in the mixed gang."

There was not a man among them who raised a bit of objection to what Wild said.

They had the utmost confidence in him, and though his partners would very much have liked to go with him on his little scouting trip, they did not ask him.

They were quite sure that he would have selected one or more of them if he had thought it wise to do so.

Wild drew back behind the bend with the men, and then he got upon his hands and knees and crawled close to the almost perpendicular wall of rock on the left.

This was the side that the shot came from, so there was no danger of his movements being perceived.

He worked his way down the trail for perhaps two hundred feet, when he came to a place where he could clamber upward by a circuitous way to somewhere close to the point where the shot came from.

No one knew his business better than Young Wild West did, and he moved as silently as a panther stealing upon its prey.

He well knew that if the outlaws who had robbed the mail coach were really up where the shot had been fired from, they would be watching the men who were gathered in a bunch around the bend.

They would hardly be expecting a visit from one alone.

Though our hero did not exactly intend to pay them a visit, he did mean to get close enough to see just how they were located.

That is, of course, if there was any more than one there.

Only one shot had been fired, and that might mean that there was only one there.

Nearer and nearer Wild got to the point.

He was proceeding with the utmost caution now, for he did not know at what moment he might come upon some one.

There was a narrow ledge in front of him, which ran in an angle around the face of a precipice, and he felt that if he could manage to get across this he would be able to see something.

CHAPTER II.

THE DUEL ON THE MOUNTAINSIDE.

As Young Wild West started to creep along the narrow ledge a presentiment of danger suddenly came upon him.

As he reached the angle where the turn must be made he paused for an instant and listened.

Then he gave a start of surprise, for the labored breathing of a human being within a few feet of him came to his ears.

Revolver in hand, he crouched on the ledge that overhung the deep abyss, and waited for what was to come.

But not the least tinge of fear shot through the boy's frame. He was simply anxious, and as cool as though he was but waiting for the appearance of a friend who was to meet him there.

The breathing denoted that whoever it might be was crawling along the ledge from the opposite direction.

That meant that a meeting of the two was inevitable.

There was no other place where a person could be and his breathing heard.

In less than two seconds, though it seemed a great deal longer to Wild, a tuft of feathers suddenly showed within three feet of his face.

He raised his revolver to fire, but before he could pull the trigger the tuft was thrown back and the ugly face of a Sioux chief peered from behind the angle of rock.

"Ah!" exclaimed Young Wild West, a tinge of triumph in his voice. "Gray Elk, I am glad to meet you! I heard that you were dead, but it seems that it was a false report."

"Ugh!" grunted the Indian. "Paleface boy make heap big talk. He no want to see Gray Elk!"

"Oh, yes, he does, Chief. You know that I owe you an old grudge, don't you? You have sworn a dozen times to wear my scalp in your belt; you have had me tied to a tree

and enjoyed yourself throwing knives and tomahawks at me; you have lighted the fire to burn me at the stake, but here I am yet. Now, Gray Elk, one of us has got to die! One of us will go tumbling to the sharp rocks a thousand feet below, and the carrion birds will feast upon the decaying flesh. Which of us is it to be, Gray Elk?"

The face of an Indian is generally almost devoid of expression, but at that moment Wild was certain that he saw just a shade of fear cross the swarthy countenance that was so near him.

He held the life of Gray Elk right in his hand, but he hesitated about sending him to the Happy Hunting Grounds of his faith.

The boy could not see what sort of a weapon the redskin had, as only his head showed around the corner of rock.

"The paleface has spoken," said the chief, in his peculiar sing-song way. "He speaks the truth when he says that one of us must die. The eye of the paleface boy is as true as the eagle's and he knows who it will be that will go to the Happy Hunting Grounds. He knows that Gray Elk has no chance. Let him shoot!"

Then in a low, humming voice, that was weird and unnatural he began chanting his death song.

Young Wild West hesitated.

There was not a drop of cowardly blood in his body, and he could not send the Indian to eternity without a show to defend himself.

Gray Elk was one of the worst of all the allies that Sitting Bull ever had, and the terrible crimes laid at his door were many; but Young Wild West realized at that moment that he was human.

And he could not murder him, though he well knew it would not be called such.

All he had to do was to press the trigger of the heavy Colt's six-shooter he held in his hand, and Gray Elk would utter a sharp cry and go whirling downward to the bottom of the abyss.

If ever a mortal thought his time had come it was certainly the Sioux chief.

He had raised his eyes toward the sky, and was chanting the death song as though he was afraid he would not get enough of it in before the end came, when suddenly Wild spoke.

"Gray Elk, I am going to give you a chance for your life," he said. "Come on around. We will go back to an open spot a few yards from here, and fight it out."

Instantly the death song ceased.

Something like gratitude shone from the red man's eyes for just an instant, and then with a nod, he exclaimed:

"Ugh!"

That meant as much as though he was satisfied and thankful at the same time.

Wild began crawling back and the chief followed him without the least hesitation.

When the boy reached the solid ground he got up on his feet.

"Gray Elk," said he, "I know you can tell the truth

when you want to. Now, tell me this: Are you here alone?"

"Yes! Others gone, one, two miles; me come back, for Gray Elk feel that paleface boy would come to shoot men who take what belong to the Great Father at Washington."

The redskin referred to the mail as belonging to the President of the United States.

All Indians called the President the Great Father.

"So you thought I would come?"

"Yes; and when Gray Elk see you he shoot, but it was too far for his bullet. Then he wait for you to come to him."

"And I came. Well, Gray Elk, I must say that you are a pretty good judge of my nature. There is one thing I want to tell you, however, and that is, that if I had shot at you from the same distance as you did at me, I would have killed you. My aim is true, Gray Elk."

"The paleface boy talks true; Young Wild West a heap big brave."

"Thanks, Chief. That is indeed a great compliment. Now, then, how do you want to fight?"

There was so much coolness about Wild that the redskin was forced to look at him admiringly.

"The paleface boy shall say which way we fight," he answered. "He will say the pistol, for he never misses with that."

"Suppose I say we shall fight with hunting knives, will that suit you?"

"Ugh! Young Wild West has spoken. We will fight with knives."

"Come on, then, Chief. Lay down your firearms. Here is a good place."

Gray Elk obeyed to the letter, and two minutes later the two stood facing each other with no other weapons than keen-edged hunting knives.

Wild knew that the redskin could use this sort of a weapon a great deal better than he could a revolver, so he gave him a chance.

But never once did he think that Gray Elk would get the best of the struggle.

Wild knew what he could do and he relied upon himself to do it.

Compared to the big-framed Indian he was but a strippling, but he was by far the most active.

Gray Elk was getting along in years; he had seen his best days at hand-to-hand fighting, but still there was a whole lot in him yet.

"Are you ready, Chief?"

"Ugh!"

Then the two blades flashed in the bright sunlight, and the duel on the mountainside was on.

Clash! Clash!

The knives came together, sending out sparks of fire. It was to be a fight to the death, for both were terribly earnest.

Back and forward, and from the right to the left they sprang with nimble feet, the labored breathing of the In-

dian chief, the clashing of the blades of steel and the sliding of their feet mingling into a confused sound.

Wild was perfectly at his ease. He knew that, barring the unexpected, he would soon be able to give the red man his death blow.

And Gray Elk realized that if he was going to win he must do it quickly.

He suddenly changed his tactics, and began forcing the fight, cutting right and left at his nimble antagonist.

Wild deftly dodged every blow, and then when the opening came he struck the blow that was to end the fight.

It did end it, but not in the way he expected it to.

The Indian must have divined what that blow meant, for he made a desperate motion to ward it off, and Young Wild West's blade struck him on the fingers that clutched the hilt of his knife, and with a clang the weapon dropped to the ground.

With the blood spurting from his wounded fingers, Gray Elk took a backward step and threw out his breast to receive the death blow.

But instead of delivering it, Wild thrust his knife into his belt.

"Go on, Gray Elk!" he said, in a voice that was full of meaning. "If there is any good in your heart, remember that Young Wild West, the paleface boy, has given you your life. Don't ever let me see you again!"

The chief looked amazed, as much as an Indian could, and then without a word, turned and picked up his trappings and started around the ledge.

Wild watched him till he was out of sight, and then started back to the trail where he had left his companions.

He found them waiting for him, rather anxiously, too, for they were not sure that he had not run into an ambush.

"Did you learn anything?" asked Cheyenne Charlie.

"Yes; the mixed gang of outlaws is located somewhere within a mile or two of where we are now."

"How did you learn this?" Jim Dart asked.

"Old Gray Elk, the Sioux chief, told me."

"What!"

"That is right. He is not dead, after all. It was he who fired the shot from over there. I had quite a talk with him, but knew there was no use in asking him a whole lot of questions."

"Well, we didn't hear you shoot, so you must have fixed him with your sticker," observed Jack Robedee, as he moved over to see if there was any blood on Wild's shirt.

There was some there, and he gave a nod of approval.

"Oh! I didn't kill the old redskin," said Wild. "I could have done it easily, but I gave him a chance for his life. Somehow I didn't feel in the humor to kill a human being without giving him a show for his life. I gave him the show, and when the time came for me to give him the finish he threw up his hand and caught it on the fingers. He dropped his knife and I told him to go on."

"Well, you are what I call a wonder!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "Why, he is the worst enemy you have got among the Sioux gang!"

"He will lay for you an' plug you ther first chance he gits," added Robedee.

"Well I told him never to let me see him again, and if he does let me see him I shall certainly draw a bead on him. Come! Let us now hunt for the outlaw gang."

His knowledge of the vicinity made Young Wild West have a pretty good idea of where the gang might be located.

There were plenty of good hiding places on the mountain, as has been said, but he felt quite sure that they would not locate very far from the trail.

It was there where they meant to do business, and if they expected to keep posted on what was passing to and fro they must not be too far away.

The cave the famous outlaw, Rob Runner, and his gang, had occupied had been pretty well demolished by explosions of gunpowder, but it would still make an admirable retreat for such a villainous gang.

And if they were really all new hands in that part of the country, it would be quite likely that they would take to that place as well as any other.

That is the way Wild figured it to himself.

"I think we had better let our horses go along at a walk," he said. "We don't want to let them know we are coming, if they should happen to be located at the old place."

"That's right!" cried one of the miners. "Young Wild West knows what's what."

This was the general opinion of all hands, so with the handsome young rider in the lead the band of determined avengers rode along the trail.

It was just about a mile from the place where the meeting with Gray Elk occurred that the cave of Rob Runner was located.

When near the spot Wild's keen eyes suddenly detected the head of a man peering from behind a jagged rock at the top of the little bluff over the cave.

"Halt!" he said, in a low tone, but loud enough for them all to hear. "Our game is in that cave. I caught a glimpse of one of them just now."

No one else had seen the man's head, but they did not for an instant doubt Wild.

He had a way of seeing and doing things that they could not.

Young Wild West smiled in a satisfied manner as Jim, Charlie and Jack looked at him expectantly.

"We have been here before," he said calmly. "We will play the same game we did when we put Rob Runner and his gang off the earth."

"That means that some of us will drop in the cave from the split in the ridge, an' ther rest stay out here an' fix 'em as fast as they come out?" Cheyenne Charlie said questioningly.

"Yes; a half-pound can of powder will start them, I guess. Who has got it?"

No one had a can, but one of the miners had a horn that contained that much of the explosive, so Wild promptly began making a fuse.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAPTURE AND ESCAPE OF HICKORY HIPE.

When the improvised bomb was made, Wild turned to Jim and Charlie, and said:

"You two will go with me; the others will ride back about a hundred feet and dismount, and when they hear the powder explode run up the trail and make the red and white renegades either fight or surrender. Is that understood, boys?"

"Yes, yes!" was the reply.

"Very well. We will chase them out, so look out you don't fire on us when we come out of the front of the cave."

"We'll be on ther watch," answered Jack Robedee.

Wild and his two companions now started up the rocky ascent to get upon the ridge that ran over the top of the cave.

They had all been there before, so they knew just how to get there.

The young dead-shot was soon at the place where he had seen the man's head when he rode up the trail at the head of the men.

But there was no sign of a human being there now.

A big portion of the top of the cave had tumbled in from the effects of a former explosion, but there was still ample room for a score or more of men and their horses to stay in.

Leaning over the break in the top of the ridge of rock, our three friends listened.

They could hear the pawing of horses' hoofs and the noise made by the animals as they munched the hay their owners had provided for them.

Wild nodded significantly.

"I don't want to kill any one with the explosion," said he. "Nor do I want to hurt their horses. We will just touch it off so it will force them to run out, and at the same time fill the cave with a thick smoke."

"Oh! It won't hurt if it kills a couple of ther rascals," retorted Cheyenne Charlie. "They don't mind killin' any one in cold blood, so I don't know why they shouldn't be treated ther same."

"Never mind, now; I'll do the touching off. Let us find a good place to slide down when the powder goes off. We must fire fast and make them think that a dozen of us have attacked them from the rear."

They crept along in a cautious manner and soon found a place that would suit their purpose.

Just as Young Wild West had lighted the fuse attached to the powder horn he detected the form of a man sneaking across the space below them.

He had been almost directly beneath them all the time, and had evidently heard what they were talking about.

Instantly three revolvers were leveled at him, and a hoarse whisper from Wild told him to come back.

Instead of obeying, the outlaw got upon his feet and started to run to the forward part of the cave.

"Don't fire!" exclaimed Wild, and then he let the powder horn go at the man.

It struck him full in the back, and bounding back, fell upon the ground in the cave's center.

The next instant it exploded with a loud noise, causing the rocky ground to dislodge from under them and send our three friends sliding to the cave below.

They had intended to come down, but not in this way.

"Now, then, open fire!" cried Young Wild West. "We can't see our game, so we must shoot on a line with our breasts. Now!"

Their shooters began to crack away right merrily, while the cave rang with hoarse yells and cries of fright.

The explosion had not harmed one of the villains, nor were the shots of Wild and his two friends touching them at all.

But they did not want to get touched by the bullets, so they did just what the men of Weston wanted them to do. They made for the open air.

No man likes to put up a fight where he cannot see his opponent, so it was only natural that, taken by surprise as they were, the villains wanted to get out where they could see what they were doing.

Out they rushed into the open, only to find themselves confronted by a crowd of determined men with leveled revolvers.

Three or four of the band put up a fight, but bit the dust in short order for their pains.

When Wild and his two companions came groping out of the cave the outlaws had surrendered, and they were rapidly being made prisoners.

There were less than a dozen of them now that three or four had gone under, and six of them were Indians.

Wild quickly looked them over. He expected to see Gray Elk among them, but he was not there.

The leader of the gang was a reckless fellow, who went by the name of Hickory Hipe.

This our friends quickly found out by questioning one of the most badly scared of the gang at the point of a revolver.

They also learned that the mail taken from the stage coach was in the cave unharmed, save that which the money had been taken from, and a couple of the miners went in and got it.

"Hickory Hipe has got all the money," said the man. "He hadn't divided it yet. Half was to go to Gray Elk an' his reds, an' the rest was to be ours."

"Where is Gray Elk?" questioned Wild.

"He ain't been with us since the hold-up," was the reply.

"The old fellow hasn't got back, then," thought the boy. "Well, it is a good thing for him that he has not, for he would swing along with the rest."

The leader of the band was soon relieved of the plunder, and fierce were the expressions he showered upon them.

"You've got me!" he cried. "But yer wouldn't have done it if I hadn't had a gang of snivelin' idiots with me. I come from Texas, where they raise men what don't know

what fear is. This lot of men I had with me ain't worth powder to blow 'em to ther old boy!"

"Never mind telling us that," retorted Young Wild West, in his easy-going way. "We have got you, just as we always get men of your stamp. You are not the first to fall into our hands, and I hardly think you will be the last. We have plenty of good strong rope down in Weston, and there is a piece waiting there for you. You say you hail from Texas, and if that is so I rather think you are wishing now that you stayed there, for you are going to dance on nothing before the sun sets this day."

"I ain't worrying over it," was the sullen retort. "I ain't given up yet, either. I've been in just as tight places as this an' got out of 'em."

"The next tight place you get into will be a rope necktie," observed Jim Dart. "Come on, boys! Let's get their horses out of the cave, the smoke has gone pretty well, now."

Half a dozen of the men went in and led out the horses.

Not one of them had been injured by the explosion, though they were all more or less excited.

The captured villains were forced to mount, and then they were tied to the animals and the ride back to Weston began.

The miners were elated at having brought the outlaws to justice so quickly. All there was left to do now was to hang the scoundrels and bury them.

But they were not destined to hang them all just then, for when but half a mile from the outskirts of Weston, Hickory Hipe, the leader of the captured gang, uttered a yell to his horse, and before a hand could be raised to stay him the animal broke away from the man who held the bridle rein, and dashed madly up a narrow gorge to the left.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the men in unison.

They knew that it was what was called a blind gorge the scoundrel had ridden into, and that before he went half a mile he would fetch up against a perpendicular wall of rock.

"A couple of you go in after him," said Young Wild West. "We will ride on into town."

The two first to turn their horses were the ones permitted to go, and then the rest rode on down the mountain side.

Wild allowed the older ones in the party to take charge of the prisoners.

He knew what would happen to them as soon as they were taken before the judge.

Wild, Jim and Jack reached the house they occupied just in time to see a little fun.

About a week before they had given employment to a young colored fellow, who had reached Weston in a state of bankruptcy.

His duties were to take care of the horses, and attend to all other outside work.

His name was Ike, and he had one of the greatest appetites ever known.

Ike had a way of sneaking into the kitchen when Wing

Wah, the Chinese cook, was not looking, and helping himself to various eatables.

The Chinaman was boss of the kitchen, and the darky was boss of the outside work, so when Ike got to helping himself Wing Wah got mad.

He had told Wild about it several times, but he only laughed and told the cook to fire him out the next time he caught him there.

And just as they got to the house, very hungry from what they had passed through up on the mountain, the cook had caught the darky stealing some of the fancy stuff he had made up to please his masters.

Wing Wah was going to do just as Wild told him, that is, if he could.

He had caught Ike red-handed, and he got a grip upon the collar of his shirt before the darky knew what struck him.

"Gettee out, you blackee tief!" Wing Wah was screaming when our friends came in, so they paused and listened.

"Leggo, dar!" cried Ike. "I ain't no thief. Leggo, dar!"

"Misler Wild say Wing Wah fire you outee when he catchee you. Outee you go!"

Wild and the other two crept up to the doorway and saw the Chinaman pull the coon over backward, and start on a gallop for the back door, which was open.

They broke into a hearty laugh when they saw Ike hauled outside and dumped in a confused heap on the ground.

But the cook was pretty mad, and he began to kick the man-of-all-work with his wooden shoes.

This had the effect of making the darky get upon his feet a great deal quicker, and the next instant the two belligerents were at it hammer and tongs.

"Wow-wow-wow!" screamed the Chinaman, as the darky landed a couple of good ones on his face.

"Lookout, dar! Stop youse scratchin'!" yelled Ike, when he got a good dig across the nose.

In less than ten seconds they clinched, and then they went down, the Chinaman landing on top.

He took off one of his wooden shoes and began beating Ike over the head with it, when Wild stepped up and interfered.

"That will do, Wing," he said. "Never hit a man when he is down. Ike, you just keep out of the kitchen hereafter till you are called in to get your meals. If the cook has given you a licking it serves you right."

"He no lick me, Marsa Wild. He done pound me on de head wif him wooden shoe. Dat no way to fight. Down in ole Kaintucky we fight wif our bar han's."

As the darky said this he pulled himself together and looked as though he would like to have another chance at the cook.

Wing Wah was ready for him, and he even took a step toward him.

"Stop!" called out Wild, affecting a voice of anger. "Now, if I catch you saying cross words to each other

again I am going to make you fight it out with pistols. Do you understand that?"

Both said very meekly that they did, and then our three friends went into the house to get the meal they had waited so long for.

They were really hungry, and as their cook was an exceptionally good one, they had no cause to complain about the food set before them.

"There is bound to be some fun before Wing Wah and Ike settle the difference that has come between them," said Jim. "If you meant it when you said that you would make them fight it out with pistols if they were caught quarreling again, I'll bet a Mexican cheroot that the fight will take place before sunset."

"I certainly meant it," replied Wild. "But, of course, I mean to see to it that there are no bullets in the revolvers when the fight takes place. I wouldn't bet with you, Jim, for I feel that the fight will come off, myself. It will be a duel between Africa and China, and we will have it on the platform the carpenters are putting up."

"Ther Chineee has got ther most nerve of ther two, I think," remarked Jack, as he leaned back in his chair and picked his teeth in a thoughtful attitude.

"That is not saying a great deal, either," Jim hastened to reply.

"I'll speak to Walter's wife and tell her to let me know if she hears or sees any trouble between the two," said Wild.

Jenkins lived next door in a neat little shanty of his own.

The company had given him the lot to build it on, and he was very happily and comfortably located.

Wild did speak to Mrs. Jenkins a few minutes later, and she promised to do as he wanted her to, though she could not imagine what was up.

The three walked over to the office, which was but a short distance away, and just as they got there the two men who had been sent up the gorge to bring back Hickory Hipe rode up.

They had the outlaw's horse, but the villain was not with them.

"We couldn't find the galoot," said one of them.

"What!" exclaimed Young Wild West, "you couldn't find him?"

"No. We hunted all around an' got ther horse, but he was gone. We picked up ther rope all cut to pieces that he had been tied to ther horse with, but he'd disappeared, jest as though ther ground had swallowed him!"

The men seemed to be crestfallen at their failure to bring the miscreant in, for they had taken their time about it, thinking surely that he could not get out of the blind gorge.

Wild and his companions could not understand it, either.

"There was only one way for him to escape," observed our hero, after a pause, "and that was to be assisted by some one. Now, then, who could have cut the ropes that bound him, and set him free?"

No one could answer this, and as the two who had gone after the outlaw were entirely above suspicion, it was given up as a puzzler.

"That fellow will make trouble around here," observed Jim, in a low tone to Wild. "He is about the ugliest specimen of a white man I have set my eyes on in a long time."

"I am a little bit of that opinion myself," was the reply. "Well, if he does start in to kick up a fuss around here, I guess we will be able to make short work of him."

"What are we goin' to do about it?" asked one of the men who had returned without their man.

"There is nothing left to do but to scour the vicinity," retorted Wild. "You may run across him."

The men promptly put spurs to their steeds and rode off.

Their actions showed that they meant to recapture Hickory Hipe, if there was a possible way of doing it.

Wild was thinking about going after his own horse and joining in the hunt, when he saw Cheyenne Charlie coming over at the head of a sort of female procession.

His wife, Anna, Arietta, old man Murdock's wife, and Eloise Gardner, made up the party, and as Wild looked at them it occurred to him that they had been invited to take tea with Mrs. Jenkins that day.

"The girls are coming, Jim," he said. "I guess we will let outlaw hunting alone for awhile."

"That's right," was the retort of young Dart, who had eyes for no one but pretty Eloise.

Arietta came running up to her lover ahead of all the rest, and the first thing she noticed about him was the blood on his shirt.

"Been in close quarters again, have you?" she said.

"Yes; but that blood don't amount to anything. It came from the fingers of old Gray Elk, the chief who fell in love with you once upon a time."

While Arietta was looking at him in surprise, Mrs. Jenkins came running from the house.

"The Chinaman and negro are fighting!" she cried.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW CHEYENNE CHARLIE BEAT THE GAMBLERS.

"What's up, anyhow?" asked Cheyenne Charlie, as he noticed the grins on the faces of Jim and Jack, when Walter Jenkins' wife delivered her message to Young Wild West.

"Wait and see," replied Jim. "There is going to be some fun in a few minutes."

"Who with?"

"The Chinnee and the coon."

Wild had made a bee-line for the house, followed by Arietta.

The rest followed them leisurely.

"You fellows get them and bring them out to the platform," said Wild. "I'll fix up the pistols for them."

That was sufficient, and Charlie and Jack at once made a dive for the back of the house where the two were at it tooth and nail.

It made no difference whether they wanted to come or not; when the two scouts got hold of them they had to go.

This took all the fight out of the belligerent pair, but that made no difference; there was going to be a duel between Africa and China, and that was all there was about it.

The women folks were soon told of what was going on, and they were just as anxious to see the fun as the men.

Jim went to the workmen and told them to clear a space on that part of the platform that was completed, and they did so in no time.

In about ten minutes Wild and Arietta came over to the platform, each carrying a heavy six-shooter.

The chambers were loaded heavily with powder, but there were no bullets.

Ike and Wing Wah were dragged upon the platform and made to face each other at a distance of about twenty feet.

"Now," said Wild, "you fellows persist in fighting, so now you have got to fight. This is the way we do it in Weston. Here are revolvers all loaded for you, so all you have got to do is to aim at each other, and when I give the word, let the lead fly. Are you ready?"

"Me ready, allee samee," Wing Wah managed to falter.

"For de gracious sakes, Marsa West!" cried the ducky, "I'se done can't shoot."

"Well, if you don't shoot I'll begin to shoot myself. I'll take every kink out of your wool, I give you my word for it. It seems that you two fellows can't get along, so this is the only way to settle your differences. One or both of you are apt to bite the dust, but what does that matter? It only happens once in a lifetime."

The trembling ducky took the revolver, for he thought if he did not obey, Wild would surely shoot the kinks out of his black wool.

Wing Wah took the other weapon, though he acted as though he hardly knew what he was doing.

Quite a crowd had collected by this time, very few of them knowing that the revolvers were not loaded with bullets.

But they enjoyed it just as much as if they had been aware of that fact.

"When I say three I want you to both fire. If you don't, I will!" exclaimed Wild.

Something that might have been meant for a nod came from the frightened pair, and then Wild began to count.

"One!"

The ducky gave a gasp, and looked around for a pitying glance, which he failed to get.

"Two!"

The almond eyes of the Chinaman blinked nervously.

"Three!"

Bang! Bang!

The duelists fired point blank at the platform, as though it had been mutually agreed by them to do so.

"That won't do," called out Young Wild West. "I want you fellows to shoot to kill, do you understand that?"

He spoke in such a harsh tone that they thought he surely meant it.

Wing Wah then raised his revolver till it pointed directly at the darky's breast, and closing his eyes, pulled the trigger.

Ike uttered a yell and jumped back, but realizing that he had not been touched, he plucked up courage to fire two shots at his antagonist in rapid succession.

After that both got down to business, and the chambers of both revolvers were soon emptied.

Then Young Wild West led the crowd in giving the pair the laugh, and coming to the conclusion that something was wrong, Ike and Wing Wah dropped their pistols and made a leap from the platform.

They started on a run and did not stop until they reached the house.

"I guess that will make them stop quarreling and fighting," observed the handsome young Prince of the Saddle. "Every time they get mad at each other now they will think of their great duel, and that will be enough to make them shut up."

"You are always up to something, Wild," observed Arietta, as she took his arm and walked with him over to the Jenkins' shanty. "If you are not fighting, you are fooling some one. When are you going to settle down, like Walter Jenkins has?"

"Well, Et, I'll tell you. I expect to settle down when I am laid low by some bullet. It isn't in me to live a quiet life, as I have often told you before. Why, look at your grandfather and Dove-Eye Dave! They haven't settled down yet."

"But they were never as reckless and wild as you are."

"Well, my name is Wild, so I suppose I must live up to it. Don't you worry, now. I won't get hurt. I wear the charm you gave me, and that keeps me from getting hurt."

"I heard you say you were not superstitious once," said the girl.

"I think every one is more or less superstitious. I don't believe in ghosts or omens, but I do believe in that charm you gave me, because there is a lock of your hair in it. I believe in that as much as I believe in you, and you know that is a whole lot."

That settled the pretty Western girl's argument. All girls like to be petted and flattered, and she was no different from the general run in that respect.

It was a very nice time that they had at the home of the Jenkinses that afternoon and evening.

The ladies were allowed to run things just the way they wanted to, and so everything went along like clock-work.

After the little party broke up, rather late in the evening, Wild and Charlie took a walk over to the Gazoo to see if there were any tidings of Hickory Hipe, who had made his escape in such a mysterious manner.

A number of the men had searched the vicinity of the gorge till dark, but had been unsuccessful.

There were two or three new arrivals in the bar, and when they learned that Young Wild West was there they became very curious.

They had heard of him, but had never seen him.

Proprietor Brown introduced them to him, and it did not take the young mine owner long to decide that they were gamblers.

He seldom made a mistake in his judgment, and a few minutes later when two of the strangers entered the back room and took a seat at an empty table, he nodded to himself in a satisfied way.

"Give us a poker deck," called out one. "We have got to do something to pass the time away."

The cards were promptly brought out, and then Wild and Charlie were invited to take a hand, just for the fun of it.

Wild refused, but Cheyenne Charlie could not resist the temptation to play a few hands.

His young friend did not try to dissuade him; he wanted to find out what sort of men the new comers were, and by watching them gamble he could soon form a pretty good idea.

The game started in with very small bets, Charlie winning slightly.

Another stranger soon came in and took a seat at the table, and after watching them play a couple of hands, asked if he could come in.

"Certainly," was the reply, so the game became a four-handed one.

The bets began to grow larger, and Charlie held his own.

At the expiration of an hour he was over a hundred dollars ahead, and the betting was beginning to run away up.

Wild had lighted a good cigar, and sat where he could watch the hands of both Cheyenne Charlie and the last stranger who came into the game.

It was the stranger's turn to deal the cards, and when Charlie picked up his hand he found it to contain four queens and the ten of clubs.

That was a pretty good hand, but the fact that the dealer kept his hand concealed made Wild think that it would not prove to be the winning hand.

Charlie had now become infatuated with the game, as he was wont to become when he once got to playing, and he calmly made it cost the others two hundred dollars to draw cards.

Wild managed to catch his eye and give him a glance which plainly meant to stop, but the warning was not heeded.

"All right," thought the boy, "go it! You'll find out that you can never win in a square game of poker—not with such fellows as you are playing with."

The man on Charlie's left raised it another two hundred, the next man lifted it another, and the dealer met him.

That made \$1,800 on the table before the cards were drawn.

"How many?" asked the dealer, as he knocked the ash from his cheroot.

"One," answered Charlie.

The next man took one also, and so did the next.

The dealer took two, and Wild was quick enough to catch a glimpse of the cards and note the fact that they were the ace of hearts and the ace of clubs.

"Let yourself slide, pardner," the fellow said to Charlie. "You'll find that I won't stand any bluffing, so I give you fair warning."

"That's all right," was the rejoinder. "I'll go a hundred on what I've got."

"I'll meet that bet," observed the next man, "just to see what you have got."

"So will I," said the other man, and he tossed five twenty-dollar gold pieces on the table.

The dealer had not looked at his cards after he had discarded and drawn, and he left them lying on the table in front of him.

"I'll meet the bet and raise it five hundred," he remarked, as calmly as though he was simply enjoying himself at a picnic.

Wild was watching the dealer like a cat watches a mouse, and when he saw his hand slide into his lap he felt certain that he was feeling for two aces that he had stowed there.

There was the amount of twenty-seven hundred dollars on the table now, and as Cheyenne Charlie put up the necessary five hundred and called him, the dealer was feeling nervously about in his lap.

Wild now grew very much interested.

He was quite sure that something had interfered with the man's plans.

The other two gamblers dropped out of the game.

Then they looked at each other in a puzzled way.

They knew that something was wrong with their confederate, for the three were really sharps, and had started in to fleece Cheyenne Charlie of all he had.

"What's that? Did you call me?" asked the dealer, nervously.

"That's what I did, stranger," was the reply. "What have you got?"

With no little hesitation the man picked up the five cards in front of him and turned them over.

He had noticed that the man who had called him had allowed his hand to drop to the butt of his revolver, and that made him act with a little more quickness, probably.

When the cards were shown he had but a pair of aces.

Charlie showed his four queens and scooped in the pot.

Then he took two cards from his lap and tossed them over to the discomfited gambler.

"Them's the pair you wanted, stranger," said he, tantalizingly. "I seen you put 'em in your lap when you dealt, so I thought I'd better cabbage onto 'em. Good night, gentlemen! You are the most obliging lot of sharps I ever met."

Young Wild West whistled with surprise.

He had not believed it to be in the scout to beat such people at their own game.

The three men looked at each other, and then at Cheyenne Charlie.

They evidently concluded it best not to make a row, so they got up and accepted his invitation to drink.

They had just dropped a little over three thousand dollars between them, and though they felt like squealing, they dared not do it.

They had heard about the young dead-shot who was with the man who had downed them.

"I seldom play poker," said Charlie, as he paid for the drinks at the bar, "but when I do play I like to win, of course. Good night, gentlemen. We must be going!"

"Good night," was the reply, and Proprietor Brown, of the Gazoo, grinned softly to himself as Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie left the place.

CHAPTER V.

THE DANCE.

Things ran along pretty smoothly in Weston, and finally, Wednesday evening arrived.

All arrangements had been made for the grand dance under the auspices of the Wild West Mining and Improvement Company.

Ever since ten in the morning people had been arriving from Spondulicks and Devil Creek, and the affair promised to be a great success.

Jack Robedee had brought the lovely young widow over, and Lively Rick and two or three of the best citizens of Devil Creek had come along.

It was surprising to see how many strangers were in town, too.

There were whites, half-breed Indians, greasers and all kinds of men of a doubtful character.

But as it was to be a public dance, free to all, no one could be barred, so long as they behaved themselves.

When they got so they did not behave, then Young Wild West and the other members of the company would make themselves heard.

Wild hoped that everything would go right, but he made up his mind that no rough work would be tolerated from anyone.

Three musicians had come over from Spondulicks, and when they struck up the grand march shortly after darkness set in, sixty couples, with Wild and Arietta at their head, started around the big platform.

It was a great thing for the hustling town in the Hills, and when the march started a rousing cheer went up from the miners, cowboys and scouts who were not lucky enough to have partners to join in.

But they enjoyed it just the same.

The company had refused to allow any one the privilege

of selling whiskey on the grounds, but there was plenty of it there, for the men brought it with them in bottles and jugs.

The dancing opened with an old-fashioned quadrille; the ease and grace with which Wild and his friends went through it was well worth seeing.

Jack and the widow, who, by the way, had a head of fiery red hair, cut a great figure on the floor.

Neither of them had ever danced before, but that made no difference; they went right along, not getting confused when a mistake was made.

"Heads forward!" cried the man who was doing the calling off. "Two ladies forward! Two gents forward! Balance all!" and so on.

After the first dance Wild took a walk about the floor to see who were there.

There were a whole lot there he knew, and quite a number he had never seen before.

Among those he took particular notice of were the three gamblers Cheyenne Charlie had so neatly beaten at their own game a few nights before.

One of these men walked up to Wild as he came to a halt after making the rounds of the platform.

"My name is Spruce—Dave Spruce," he said. "I saw you dancing with a rather pretty girl a little while ago. I congratulate you on your choice. I don't suppose you would have any objection to introducing me to her, would you?"

"Well, I don't know about that," retorted the boy, in his usual frank way of speaking. "I don't know what sort of a man you are, only that you are a card sharp, and I must say that I haven't much use for men of your profession. The girl I was dancing with I hope to make my wife some day, so I guess I won't take the trouble of introducing you to her."

"You are rather jealous, I see," was the reply from Dave Spruce. "I didn't mean any harm by saying what I did. You haven't any idea that I would try to take the girl away from you, have you?"

This made Wild just a trifle angry.

"I don't know what ideas you have, nor do I care," he said. "But I won't introduce you, so say no more about it."

"Um—ah!" and the gambler laughed softly to himself, as though he imagined he was a regular lady-killer.

Young Wild West was not the sort to seek a quarrel with any one, unless he had a purpose in view, and as he had nothing against the man beyond the fact that he did not like him, he walked away.

The next dance was a Spanish fandango, at least, that is what Charlie said it was, and the way the scout went through the evolutions with Anna, his wife, was so amusing that Wild forgot all about what the gambler had said to him, for the time being, anyway.

The next set he danced with Jack Robedee's widow, by special request from Jack, and when he had led the woman to a seat at the close of the dance he was glad the ordeal was over.

The widow was very clumsy, and he being light of foot, the dancing went through rather awkwardly.

Arietta came up to him as he was about to go and look for her.

Her face wore a troubled look and he thought of Dick Spruce, the gambler, right away.

"Wild, a man just insulted me," she said.

"What!" he cried. "Show him to me and I will make him apologize, or else I'll——"

His fingers instinctively clutched the butt of the handsome silver-mounted revolver in the right holster of his belt.

"Don't get mad, Wild," she said, pleadingly. "Don't do anything rash. I only told you so you would stay near me until the dance is over, so he wouldn't have anything more to say to me."

"Just point him out, Et."

The young dead-shot of the great West was as cool as an iceberg now.

Arietta hesitated a moment, and then pointed over to where three men were standing, laughing and chatting together.

"There he is," she said. "The man to the right. He came to me and insisted on me dancing with him. I excused myself, and then he made a very insulting remark."

"I know him, little one. He is the fellow Charlie downed at draw poker the other night. He is a card sharp. He asked me a short time ago to introduce you to him; said you were very pretty and all that. I told him I guessed I wouldn't introduce you, and then he said I was jealous. I shan't say anything to him, Et, unless he bothers you again."

Wild and his girl were seated on a bench at the farther end of the platform, well away from intruders, they thought.

But they were mistaken in this, for before two minutes had passed who should come over to them but Spruce.

He had been drinking rather heavily of whiskey, and was reckless in his manner.

He did not seem to realize that he was treading on very dangerous ground.

"Aha! Mr. West, I am determined that you shall introduce me to the young lady," began the gambler, twisting his big black mustache and making a very polite bow. "I——"

That was all he said, for with the quickness of a catamount Young Wild West was on his feet, revolver in hand.

"Move away from here, Mr. Spruce, or I will fill you full of lead!" the boy cried, hotly.

"Is that the only way you can make me go away—shoot me?"

There was a sarcastic ring in the man's voice as he asked the question.

"No; that isn't the only way," and back went the revolver into the holster. "If you persist in insulting this young lady I will give you a thrashing, the same as they do it in the East."

"Ha, ha, ha! Talk is cheap, my young friend. Why, I will take you by the back of your neck and snap off your heels if you don't look out."

"Will you?"

Just how it was the gambler never did realize, but the first thing he knew he was seized about the waist and thrown high over the head of the treasurer of the Wild West Mining and Improvement Company.

He came down upon the platform with a thud that jarred his body as it had never been jarred before.

"Get out, now! Get off the platform, or I will hurt you!" cried Wild, angrily.

The gambler was a very wiry sort of a man, and he was reckless from the whiskey he had imbibed.

He was upon his feet very quickly and full of fight.

"I don't know how you performed that trick, but I'll bet you can't do it again!" he hissed.

Young Wild West now went into him like a prize fighter.

His right and left shot out with lightning-like rapidity, and Spruce went sprawling to the floor again.

When he tried to get up Wild gave him another, and then the insulting villain reached to draw his revolver.

But a kick sent the weapon flying from his grasp before he hardly had it from his hip pocket.

His two companions came rushing up, followed closely by Jim Dart and Jack Robedee and several others who had witnessed the last part of the row.

"Look out, now!" exclaimed Wild, sternly. "The first man who draws a shooter will drop dead, I give you my word on that."

"What's the trouble?" demanded Jim, taking Arietta by the arm and leading her away.

"It is all right, Jim," replied Wild. "I was just giving this fellow a lesson, that's all."

The gambler's two friends assisted him to his feet, and then all three left the platform.

Evidently they knew when they had enough.

Very few of those present had witnessed this little scene, so the dancing was not interrupted to any great extent.

Wild and Arietta went into the next square dance just as though nothing had happened to disturb them.

But our hero was on the lookout for the reappearance of the three men, just the same.

Jim Dart took a quiet walk to see what they were up to.

He followed them over to Brown's Gazoo, where they were stopping, and the moment he went inside they turned on him, and drawing their revolvers proceeded to let the lead go at him.

But Dart did not flinch.

On the contrary, he whipped out his own six-shooter and opened fire.

One of the villains dropped to the barroom floor with a bullet through his heart, and another got a bullet into his left arm.

The remaining one, who was Spruce, the man who had caused all the trouble, darted into the back room and jumped out of a window.

"I am sorry I made a muss for you to clean up," said Jim, coolly. "But it was some one else's life or mine. They drew on me first."

"That's right," answered the man in charge of the bar. "Gracious! You are as quick as lightning, Mr. Dart."

"I have to be in order to get through the world with a whole skin."

"What was the trouble between them fellers and you?"

"Nothing, really. They knew I was a friend of Wild's, and as he just downed them a few minutes ago, they thought they would drop me, just to get square, I suppose."

The man with the wounded arm was whining with pain, and turning to him, Jim said:

"Go and get the doctor to attend you. And remember, if you expect to stay in Weston very long you have got to act right."

Jim walked out and went back to the dance.

He found Eloise anxiously awaiting him.

"Where did you go, Jim?" she asked.

"Over to Brown's Gazoo. I followed the fellow there who got into trouble with Wild."

"And something happened—I can tell by the looks of your eyes."

"Yes; something did happen. The three gamblers were together, and they began shooting at me the instant I poked my head through the doorway."

"You didn't get hurt, did you?"

"No; but two of the men did. The fellow Wild gave the lesson to jumped out of the window."

The pretty girl said no more.

She had been in the wild West long enough to know what probably happened to the two who got hurt.

She had an idea that they both were dead, and as only one of them was, she was just half right.

Pretty soon Wild came over to where Jim and his girl stood talking.

Arietta was with him.

Wild knew that Jim had followed up the three men, and he was just a trifle anxious to know what had become of them.

When Jim told him what had happened at the Gazoo, the handsome young fellow shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, Jim, I am sorry it fell to your lot to put one of them out of the way," he observed. "You were lucky that they did not hit you when they opened up the game."

"It isn't everybody who can shoot quick and hit the mark at the same time. Those fellows would certainly have riddled me if I had given them time to draw bead on me. They are not up to our style of shooting."

For the next hour everything went along smoothly.

The dancers were having a good time, and those who were looking on were enjoying themselves fully as well.

Jack Robedee and the widow with the red hair were not missing a set.

They had got so they could go through without making so many mistakes, and that made them just crazy to dance.

Young Wild West and the rest found much amusement in watching the couple.

It seemed strange and out of place to see Robedee paying so much attention to a woman.

He had always talked against them until he met the dashing widow.

Lively Rick, who had come from the Creek with him, could not help tantalizing Jack a little.

Lively's girl was also a widow. Her husband had been a Nevada cattle raiser, and she was an out-and-out Western woman.

She could handle a gun or swing a lariat about as good as the average man.

Lively had not been acquainted with her very long, and therefore he did not know what sort of a temper she had.

Nevada Kate was the name she went by, and it had been remarked by some one that "she would never be hung for her beauty."

There was one failing that Lively Rick had, and that was that he would get under the influence of whiskey sometimes.

He was very much this way when he came up to where our friends were seated, with Nevada Kate leaning on his arm in a languishing way.

Jack Robedee and his charming widow came along at about the same time.

Then Lively thought he would have a little fun with Jack.

"If there is anything I dote on it's sorrel hair," he remarked to Wild with a grin. "Jack has got ther puttiest gal in Devil Creek!"

Then something happened that no one was prepared to see.

Nevada Kate reached over and grasped her escort by the ear.

"If you like red hair so well it's a wonder you didn't bring a red-headed woman to the dance!" she cried, in a jealous rage.

"Who are you callin' names?" roared Jack's woman, in a shrill falsetto key. "I'll larn ye some manners! Jest take that!"

She hit the widow from Nevada a smart rap on the chin with her clenched fist, and then a savage fight started between the two.

She with the red hair was a veritable hurricane. She sent in her blows right and left and was fast getting the best of her opponent, when Nevada Kate made a quick grab and got a revolver from the belt of Lively Rick.

"Now, dance, you red-headed centipede!" she cried, forcing Jack's girl out upon the floor at the point of the revolver. "Dance, I say! Dance, or I'll shoot your toenails off! I'm Nevada Kate, an' I never miss when I pull a trigger!"

Strange as it may seem no one offered to interfere with them.

There was a grin on everybody's face, even to Jack and Lively Rick.

The sorrel-topped woman from Devil Creek looked at the smiling faces appealingly, and seeing no help for her, started in to dance.

Nevada Kate emptied the chambers of the revolver, sending the bullets dangerously close to the feet of the dancing widow, and then said she was satisfied.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEATH OF GRAY ELK.

Hickory Hipe had certainly executed a remarkable move in getting away from his captors.

He was not aware that he had turned into a blind gorge, though, or his manner would not have been so jubilant.

He was helpless, as far as helping himself was concerned, for his hands were tied securely behind his back, and he was bound to the horse.

But he was not the sort who think of what is to come till it gets there.

He was out of the clutches of Young Wild West and his men, and that was all he thought of just now.

The horse he rode was a very intelligent creature, and it answered every word of command to go ahead and every pressure from the knees of the scoundrel.

He had a pretty good lead on his pursuers, as he had taken them completely by surprise, and when he had covered a couple of hundred yards and could not see them, he uttered a satisfied laugh.

Then he began to struggle to free himself.

But try as he might he could not get his hands loose.

On galloped the horse, going at the top of its speed.

At the expiration of three minutes Hickory Hipe suddenly realized that he could go no further.

On either side of him there was an almost perpendicular wall of rock and earth, and now directly ahead of him he saw the same.

"Confound it all," he muttered, as the horse came to a halt for the reason it could go no further, "I suppose I will be taken, after all! Why didn't I turn in some other direction, anyway? Oh! if my hands were only free and I had my shootin' irons!"

"Ugh!"

The guttural exclamation came from a point almost over his head, and looking up, the villain saw the tufted head of an Indian.

The face was turned right toward him, too, and he instantly recognized it as belonging to Gray Elk, his redskin ally.

"Hello, Gray Elk!" he called out, in a low tone. "Come down and cut me loose, won't you? They will be here after me in a minute."

"Gray Elk help Hickory Hipe right away," was the reply. "He see him come, and he git rope ready."

The next instant a lariat came down right before the outlaw.

The other end was tied to a tree above, and in much less time than it takes to record it, the Indian chief came sliding down to the ground.

A few slashes of his hunting knife and Hickory Hipe sprang from the saddle to the ground, a free man.

Then with a grunt of approval the chief seized the lariat, and with the agility of a trained athlete, went swiftly upward hand over hand.

"Paleface brave come on up!" he panted, when he got to the top. "Gray Elk hear horses coming. Hurry up!"

Hickory Hipe tried to ascend the way his Indian friend had done, but he was not near so agile, and he was making but poor progress, when Gray Elk began hauling upon the lariat.

Hickory Hipe just got landed when two horsemen appeared in the gorge.

The white and red dropped on their stomachs and wriggled themselves into the bushes without being seen by the searchers.

"Put her there, Gray Elk!" exclaimed the outlaw, when they reached a safe place on the mountain side. "You have saved my life, an' I'll never forgit you for it!"

"Hickory Hipe speaks well," was all the redskin said.

Neither of them had a horse, so they started on foot to reach the band of Indians who had been allied with the renegades in the attack on the stage coach that morning.

They plodded along till darkness overtook them, and they had not found them yet.

Almost exhausted they sank down to rest in a little glen at the head of a ravine.

Neither of them was in a good humor, though Hickory Hipe did the most fault finding.

He kept on picking till the chief began to grow tired of it.

"Hickory Hipe heap much fool!" he said, suddenly. "He let the palefaces take the money we steal from the wagon, and then he ride away an' Gray Elk save him. Now he mad with Gray Elk."

"You shet up!" retorted the renegade. "I ain't half as much of a fool as you are!"

"The words of the paleface is like the wind; it goes past the ears of Gray Elk, means nothing."

"It does, hey? You don't know what you are talkin' about, I guess. I've had bad enough luck to-day, without listenin' to your croaking. Jest shet up, now, or me an' you will fight."

The chief lapsed into silence.

He was not afraid of the white man, but for some reason he did not want to fight with him just then.

A few minutes later he arose and started from the spot.

He was going to find the camp of his braves if he could.

Not wishing to be left alone the renegade followed him.

"There's no use in our bein' bad friends, Gray Elk," he said. "We both done ther best we could to-day, so let's drop it an' call it square."

"Gray Elk satisfied," was the rejoinder.

Then the two trudged along over the rough mountain.

They did not know exactly how far they were from the trail that led to the prairie, but they did not want to get upon it, for fear their enemies might be looking for them.

The stars were shining brightly, and by them Gray Elk laid his course.

Hickory Hipe's head was too thick for him to know even enough to lay out a course by the stars, so he depended strictly upon the red man to take them to a place of safety.

They kept on until midnight.

Then they agreed to rest till daylight.

A place that suited their purpose was soon found, and they both lay down to sleep.

It must have been something like half an hour after sunrise when they were awakened by hearing a voice calling to them.

Stiffened as they were from their tiresome walk, they got upon their feet instantly.

Before them stood a man holding a wearied horse by the bridle.

The stranger's face wore a worried expression, and he looked as though he might have passed a sleepless night.

"Hello, pards!" he exclaimed, in a friendly way, "I'm lost. I've been huntin' all night for ther trail that leads inter Weston, where I'm bound. I come along here a few minutes ago, an' seen you two layin' there asleep. I reckoned it wouldn't be any harm in wakin' yer, so I done so. Kin yer put me on ther right trail?"

"Oh, yes!" retorted Hickory Hipe, an evil light shining in his eyes. "We'll put yer on ther trail to Weston, certainly we will, won't we, Gray Elk?"

"Ugh!" grunted the chief.

"Gray Elk, did you say?" and the stranger looked a trifle suspicious. "This ain't ther chief Gray Elk who is on ther warpath, is it?"

"No; it ain't him. This Gray Elk is as harmless as a child. He's a good Injun, ain't you, old man?"

"Yes; me good Injun," Gray Elk grunted.

This seemed to reassure the man, for he went into his saddlebags and got out a quantity of bacon.

"We'll start a fire an' have a little breakfast," he said.

"I ain't got much, but I'll divide with yer."

"Ugh!"

Both were hungry, and as they saw the rather meager supply of bacon it struck them that there was just about enough for one.

"I'll kindle a fire right away," Hickory Hipe added, and he set about to gather up some dry twigs.

The stranger now seemed to be at his ease, and he started in to help.

"After we've had a bite an' a little coffee, which I'll make, you kin show where ther trail is, if you've a mind to."

"We'll only be too pleased to," replied the renegade.

"You kin git to Weston long afore to-night, easy enough."

"Well, I'm glad of that. I am going over there to try my luck at minin'."

As soon as the fire was started he got out a frying pan and coffee pot from the pack on the back of his saddle.

There was plenty of water a few yards distant, and while he went after it Hickory Hipe sized up his outfit and gave a grunt of approval.

"That will jest about suit me, I reckon," he mused. "In about five minutes that horse an' fixin's will be mine, see if it ain't!"

The villain had hold of the bridle rein when the stranger came back with the water.

Suddenly he whipped out the knife Gray Elk had given him, and as quick as a flash plunged it into the man.

With a groan the stranger sank to the ground, badly wounded.

"That's what I call putty neat, ain't it, Gray Elk?" Hickory Hipe remarked, as he put the knife away.

The chief made no reply.

He was evidently thinking that as a fiend he was not to be compared with the white man.

"What's ther matter with yer?" demanded Hickory Hipe. "Don't yer like ther way I done that? Well, I don't care if you don't; it is about time me an' you parted company, anyhow. How does that strike yer?"

He caught the chief entirely unawares, and the blade that had stabbed the stranger was plunged deep into his body.

Then with a hoarse laugh Hickory Hipe mounted the tired steed and rode from the spot.

Gray Elk was not dead, but he had received his death wound.

He sank upon the grass with a groan.

But in a minute he rallied and he was about to struggle to his feet, when he heard his slayer coming back.

An Indian, though dying, will not forget to use the natural strategy peculiar to his race.

Gray Elk remained perfectly still, feigning to be dead.

Hickory Hipe came back and quickly took everything of value from both his victims, not forgetting their weapons.

Then he was off again.

The wounded chief knew that he was gone for good this time, so he struggled to a sitting posture and strove to staunch the blood from his wound.

He partially succeeded in doing this, and then managed to get upon his feet.

Though suffering untold agony the red man staggered on in the direction he knew his warriors and their squaws and papooses were camped.

For half an hour he stuck it out, and then just as he heard the voice of Tripping Fawn, his granddaughter, ringing a welcome to his ears, he dropped to the ground.

The Indian maiden, who was as graceful as an antelope, and whose eyes shone like those of a startled doe, was quickly at the side of her wounded relative.

"What has happened?" she cried, in the language of the Sioux. The chief called for water, and there being a tiny stream close at hand, she hastened to obey.

Then he grew a trifle stronger, and told her how the renegade, Hickory Hipe, had given him his death wound.

"Tripping Fawn," said he, after he had made another successful rally against the grip of death, "Hickory Hipe

is a bad paleface, as most all of them are. But there is one good paleface, Tripping Fawn. He is young Wild West, the greatest of all the paleface braves! He gave Gray Elk his life, and Gray Elk is thankful to him for it. He could have shot him, but he said no. He wanted to fight Gray Elk and give him a chance. Young Wild West and Gray Elk did fight, and the young paleface brave cut the knife from Gray Elk's hand, and say to him: Go, Gray Elk; I don't want to take your life. Young Wild West's heart is right, and he is the greatest of all the paleface braves!"

The maiden gave him another drink and bathed his forehead, after which he resumed, in a voice that was remarkably strong, for one in his condition:

"Tripping Fawn must go and find Young Wild West, the bravest and best of all the palefaces. She must give him what she finds tied around the neck of Gray Elk as soon as he goes to the Great Spirit in the Happy Hunting Grounds. She must tell him that what he finds in it will make him rich; she must say to him that Gray Elk thanks him for saving his life. Does Tripping Fawn understand?"

"Yes," came the answer.

"Young Wild West brave! Gray Elk make him rich!"

Then he began to sing his death song, while the maiden kept on bathing his forehead to ease him as much as she possibly could.

Ten minutes later the chief died.

Tripping Fawn no sooner was aware that life was no more with him, than she promptly acted upon his request.

With her brown fingers trembling slightly, she loosened his clothing, and finally took a common tobacco pouch from his breast.

It was tied there with a piece of thin buffalo hide, and winding it carefully around the pouch she placed it in her bosom.

Tripping Fawn was not curious enough to open the pouch and look to see what it contained.

Her grandfather, with his dying breath, had charged her to take it to Young Wild West, and she would certainly do it, if she lived.

It was not for her to see what the pouch contained.

That was for Young Wild West.

"I will go to the great young paleface, whose eyes are as bright as the buck in the woods, and whose smile is like the summer morning," she said, with a sigh. "I will tell him what Gray Elk said; I will give him what he told me to give him, and I will look upon his face!"

The place where the Indians were camped was only a short distance away, and with the speed of the wind, Tripping Fawn ran to it.

She soon returned with four braves, who picked up the body of their chief and bore it back.

Tripping Fawn remained in the camp until after her grandfather was buried, and then one morning she mounted her pony, and without a word to her people she set out to find Young Wild West.

CHAPTER VII.

YOUNG WILD WEST'S SURPRISE.

Lively Rick did not try to have any more fun with Jack Robedee after that.

His little joke had not turned out the way he expected it to, but there had been a whole lot of fun out of it, for all that.

As it drew on toward midnight the miners grew more reckless.

They were fast becoming drunk, and insisted on doing the buck dance on the platform.

Young Wild West concluded to let them have their own way, so he advised Arietta and the rest of the women folks to go home.

This they agreed to do, so their lovers and husbands escorted them.

Nevada Kate and Jack's girl did not leave the platform, though.

They wanted to see the whole thing through, and they showed that when they wanted a thing they came pretty near having it.

Walter Jenkins remained home when he got there, but Wild, Jim and Charlie came back.

Wild was the manager of the dance, and it was necessary for him to be there to keep order.

A number of cowboys were whooping it up in great shape when they got back.

One of them had managed to get his horse upon the platform, and he was galloping around, scattering the dancers right and left.

"My friend," said Wild, as he sprang forward and caught the horse by the bridle, "this is no place for a horse. You will have to get off the platform."

"Ain't ther blamed old platform strong enough to hold ther cayuse?" he answered. "If it ain't, an' he goes through an' breaks a leg I'll make somebody pay for it."

The fellow was a stranger, but that made no difference to Wild.

He was used to handling unruly strangers, and pulling the horse around suddenly he unseated the cowboy, who landed on his back on the floor.

Then Wild slapped the steed smartly on the flank and sent him off the platform.

"Great Ginger!" roared the drunken cowboy, springing to his feet and making a move to pull his shooter, "I'll——"

"Hands up!" commanded Young Wild West, and then the fellow found himself looking straight into the muzzle of a revolver.

The music kept right on playing, and only a few of the dancers ceased their antics.

The musicians were used to having bullets whizz around their heads while they played, so it was nothing new to them.

The cowboy glared at Wild for a moment in silence, and then simply said:

"I caved. You've got ther drop on me, stranger. Who mought you be, anyhow?"

"Oh! my name is West."

The fellow gave a violent start. He was a late arrival, and though he had heard of Young Wild West he had never met him before.

"I guess I know who you are," he said. "Excuse me, Young Wild West. I reckon you are runnin' this shindig, an' not me. I won't give you any further trouble."

"That is the way I like to hear a man talk. What handle do you go by?"

"Grizzly Gus, that's my handle. I'm a rip-snorter at killin' grizzlies, but at riding a cayuse on a dancin' platform I ain't no good."

Our hero smiled at the man's show of humor.

"All right, Grizzly Gus. Now, if you will take my advice you will go and catch your horse and tie him somewhere. Then get in and enjoy yourself."

"That's what I'll do, you kin bet yer boots!"

And that was exactly what he did do. He made no more trouble that night, and the chances were that Wild had made a staunch friend of him by giving him a little dose of discipline.

When the hour of three in the morning arrived the fun was at its height.

Nearly all the females had left the platform, and the men were dancing in true Western style.

Wild was leaning against a post at one corner of the platform, wishing that the dance was over so he could turn in and get some sleep, when suddenly he saw an Indian maiden approaching him.

Where she had come from he could not divine just then.

He had not seen her get upon the platform, but he knew, of course, that she had not dropped from the sky.

She was very fancifully attired in the garb worn by the chosen maidens of her race, and her dark eyes beamed with pleasure when she saw the boy standing there all alone.

"Young Wild West heap much brave," she said, in a low, musical voice, that sounded like the rippling of a spring. "Tripping Fawn has come with a message to him."

"What is the message that Tripping Fawn brings?" asked Wild. "Her eyes beam with joy, so it must be a message of good."

"It is a heap good message that Tripping Fawn brings, though it is a sad one, too."

The maiden spoke excellent English, which showed that she must have been in the habit of associating with the whites considerably.

"Tell me what is sad about the message first, Tripping Fawn."

"Gray Elk is dead."

"What!" and Young Wild West gave a start.

"Yes; the great chief, who was the friend of Sitting Bull, is dead. He was killed by the man whose life he saved. He took the bad white chief, Hickory Hipe, from the back of his horse when he was so tied he could not help himself. He saved him from the white men who would kill him.

Then Hickory Hipe quarrels with Gray Elk and stabs him."

"I see," nodded Wild, who now understood how Hickory Hipe had made his escape from the blind gorge. "Where is the bad paleface now?"

"Tripping Fawn does not know. When she finds him she will kill him. Gray Elk was her grandfather, and he was good to her."

"So the old chief is dead, then?" our hero said, half to himself.

"Yes; but before he die he say to Tripping Fawn to go and find Young Wild West, the bravest and best of all the palefaces. He say find him and take this to him," and she handed over a leather tobacco pouch. "He say to tell Young Wild West that he thanked him for sparing his life when they fought on the mountain. He say he never forget him for that. He say take the leather pouch and Young Wild West be rich."

Though he had no idea what was in the tobacco pouch, he felt sure that it contained something of value.

This was a great surprise to Wild.

"Tripping Fawn has the thanks of Young Wild West for bringing the message of Gray Elk to him," he said, and then the girl waited no longer, but dropped to the ground from the side of the platform and vanished in the gloom of the night.

The dashing young Westerner gave a yawn, and then placing the pouch in his pocket, went in search of his associates.

He wanted to tell them of the surprise he had received.

"Getting sleepy?" asked Jim, when his best friend on earth came up to him.

"Yes; I'll be glad when the dance is over with," replied Wild. "I suppose it will be a great thing for us and the whole town, but I don't think I will undertake to give another dance."

"No; this has been quite enough for me. I suppose the men will keep it up till daylight."

"Yes; I told the musicians not to quit playing till then. Say! I just met with a great surprise."

"What do you mean?"

"The granddaughter of the old Sioux, Gray Elk, came to see me a little while ago and told me that the old fellow is dead."

"Is that so? Where were you when she found you?"

"Right over there on the platform. The chief charged her to come to me with the news that he was dead, and with his dying breath he bequeathed me some sort of a legacy."

Jim was now much interested.

"Is that so?" he queried. "What is the legacy?"

"A tobacco pouch."

"That is just like an Indian. As if you care about anything like that to remember the old scoundrel."

"Yes; but I have an idea there is something in the pouch. The maiden, who said her name was Tripping Fawn, told me that Gray Elk said the tobacco pouch would make me rich."

"Ah! That sounds a little better."

"Here is the pouch. I don't think I will bother opening it before to-morrow in the daylight. Whatever there is in it, it will keep till then."

"Yes. I reckon there won't be much."

"You can't tell about that."

"Well, why don't you open it now, then, and see?"

"No. I have made up my mind to wait until daylight."

They walked around till they found Cheyenne Charlie, and then he heard about the legacy Wild had received from old Gray Elk.

Like Jim, the scout did not think it would amount to much, though he was anxious to know what the pouch contained.

Just before dawn a free fight started on the platform, and two men were shot and half a dozen wounded.

Young Wild West thought that was about enough, so he ordered the musicians to cease playing, and drove the drunken crowd from the place.

Then it was that the gin mills in town began to do a big business, and our friends found an opportunity to turn in and get some sleep.

They were in no hurry to get up in the morning, and when they did rise they found the carpenters taking the platform down.

It had only been a temporary affair, and they did not want any more dances on their property.

One was enough to last a year.

After breakfast Wild thought of the Indian chief's legacy.

In the presence of Jim, Charlie, Jack and Lively Rick, who had put up with them, he took out the tobacco pouch and untied the cord that held it closed.

Then he dumped out a piece of tanned deer hide, which was about ten inches square and rolled in a heap.

When he had smoothed it out on the table he saw that it bore a number of characters that Indians use in place of letters when writing.

Both Wild and Charlie were quite familiar with the Sioux mode of writing letters, so after a while they managed to decipher the characters on the piece of parchment.

It started off with a man on horseback and two representations of the sun.

The drawings were very crude, of course, but were quite plain enough, at that.

"The horse and rider and the two suns mean a two days' journey," said Wild.

"That's right," nodded Charlie.

Then came three cone-like objects, with an arrow pointing at the middle one, and a broken tree close to a water-fall.

"That means that after the two days' journey is made you will arrive at the foot of three mountain peaks, and that near the center one you will find a water-fall and a broken tree," resumed our hero.

The characters were read from the top of the page, and those mentioned just took up half of it.

The lower half contained a rather mixed assortment of

horses, guns, blankets, clothing, barrels, etc., and Wild made this out to be that when one got to the place he would find the equivalent of all the things in the rude drawing.

"To sum it all up," said he, "it means for me to make a journey to a place where there are three mountains close together. It will take me two days to get there, and when I do I will find a broken tree beside a water-fall, and right there will be found a pile of gold."

"I see," observed Jim. "But where do you start from to make the two days' journey?"

"From here, of course. These pictures have not been scratched on the skin more than two or three days, if I am any judge, and if Gray Elk put them here for my benefit he certainly meant for me to start from where I was located, and he knew just where that was."

"That's right!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie. "It is as plain as day, all but one thing."

"And what is that?" questioned the young Prince of the Saddle, as he looked sharply at the parchment again.

"It don't say in what direction you are to travel."

"That is very true, but my eyes ought to tell me that. All I will have to do is to go to some high point right around this vicinity, and look around till I see the three peaks."

"Sure enough," said Lively Rick. "I s'pose you are goin' to hunt up this legacy, ain't you?"

"You can bet that I am."

Charlie nodded.

"Of course; an' you'll take us with you?"

"Yes. You four will be the ones to accompany me in search of the Indian chief's legacy. I thought at first that the tobacco pouch was the legacy, but now I know different. Old Gray Elk hasn't lied any, I'll bet. There is gold there, and plenty of it. It will be a nice journey for us, and I guess we had better start the first thing to-morrow morning."

"Good!" cried all hands in unison.

Anything with a little mystery attached to it pleased them mightily.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE WAY TO THE THREE PEAKS.

The five took a walk to the top of the nearest bluff a few minutes later, and after looking around carefully in every direction, the three peaks were located almost due south.

They just showed up above the irregular surface of the range, and that was all.

But it was sufficient to make Wild feel that the Indian chief was sincere in what he had done.

And the others were eager to see how the two days' journey would turn out.

As everything was quiet in Weston, in spite of the fact that there were so many strangers there, they got ready to start at daybreak the next morning.

Of course, their immediate friends knew where they were

going. It would hardly have been the right thing to keep them in ignorance of the legacy.

Even the women were deeply interested in the piece of parchment. There was just enough mystery and romance about the affair to make them wish they were going along.

But Young Wild West had decided on who was to go with him, and he was not one of the kind to change his mind, or to be hampered by women.

He realized that it was a rather dangerous undertaking to travel to the three peaks, since the Sioux were on the warpath, and the mountains were full of all sorts of outlaws.

But his little party would be made up of experienced scouts, who were used to all sorts of dangers and hardships.

It might be true that Lively Rick was not the bravest man on earth, but he was a regular cyclone when he had some one to lead him.

And Young Wild West was the man to do that.

There were very few people stirring in Weston when the party of five rode up the mountain side on their way to the three peaks.

They had covered a couple of miles when the sun arose, and the way was a trifle more level now since they were close to the top of the range.

In order to strike a trail leading south they had to ride about fifteen miles southeast.

In due time they struck the trail they wanted, and then they proceeded as fast as the rocky and uneven ground would permit them.

An hour's rest was taken for dinner, and then they again set out.

Jack Robedee was the only one who had ever been this way before, and that was so long ago that he got puzzled as often as did his companions.

"One thing I remember," he said, "an' that is that there are one or two dangerous places to get across. Ther only way for us to find 'em is to be on ther lookout for 'em, I s'pose."

"Well, it is a good thing that we know enough to be on the lookout for them," retorted Wild.

"This are about as lonely a place as I ever struck," observed Lively. "Here we have been on ther road over six hours, an' we ain't even met a cinnamon bear."

"We may meet more than we care to before we get to our destination," retorted Jim.

"I wish we could come across a young grizzly," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie. "If there is any kind of meat I do like, it is a steak from a young grizzly."

"I never could bear bear meat," chuckled Robedee, and then everybody smiled.

Jack would occasionally make a pun.

It was not long before Charlie's wish was gratified, for as they rounded a curving ledge that overhung a deep ravine, they suddenly heard a crashing noise a few feet ahead of them, and the next moment a big, lumbering grizzly appeared directly in front of them.

Young Wild West was the least surprised of any of them, and not wanting to give the big brute a chance to claw the beautiful horse he rode, he drew bead on it with his rifle and sent a bullet crashing into its brain through the right eye.

The grizzly toppled over and rolled in the agonies of death.

"My! but that was a great shot!" exclaimed Lively Rick, in admiration.

"Well, it would not have paid to miss the eye," was the reply. "If I had missed you would have seen a lively time around here for a while. A grizzly is hard to kill, you know, and sometimes it is hard to reach a vital part. With a rifle there is no better place than the eye, especially if the bear is standing upright, as he was. Now, Charlie, you can have your bear steaks, I guess."

"I reckon I kin," was Cheyenne's retort. "This feller ain't a young grizzly, but I'll tackle a haunch of him, just ther same."

The rest waited until he had cut off one of the hind quarters, and then they proceeded on again.

They had covered a little less than half a mile when it occurred to Cheyenne Charlie that he had left his hunting knife by the carcass of the bear.

"I don't want to lose that knife," he said. "I've had it too long for that. You fellers ride on slow an' I'll go back an' git it. It won't take me so very long. Here, Jack, you take this chunk of meat."

"All right," answered Robedee, and then the scout turned his horse and went cantering back to where they had left the carcass of the grizzly.

He had not been gone more than two or three minutes when our friends heard the sounds of shooting behind them.

"Charlie has got into trouble!" exclaimed Wild, wheeling his horse around. "To the rescue, boys!"

Away they dashed over the back track, the fleet sorrel leading by several lengths.

Young Wild West had his rifle ready for business, for he certainly expected to get a shot at something in a very short time.

Two minutes from the time they had heard the shots they saw Charlie galloping toward them.

The horses were quickly reined in.

"What's the matter?" asked Wild.

"I had a pretty close call. I guess," was the reply. "I was not long in getting back to the place, or pretty close to ther place, I should say, for as soon as I come in sight of ther carcass I seen that some one had started a fire right near it. They must have got there as soon as we left. Well, I knowed I had better look out, so I wheeled my horse around and made for cover. Half a dozen shots were fired at me from behind ther rocks, but not a one of 'em touched me. That's all there is to it. I don't know whether they was whites or reds."

"You was mighty lucky to git off so easy," observed Lively. "Like as not it is some gang follerin' us."

"That's jest what I think," chimed in Robedee.

Wild and Jim nodded as though they thought so, too, and then a council of war was held.

After a short discussion it was decided to go on, and not turn back to give battle to the villains in ambush.

"If they are really following us we will give them a chance to overtake us before night sets in, and then we will see what kind of stuff they are made of," said our hero.

That suited the ideas of all hands, so they rode on at a smart clip, Charlie being compelled to leave his knife behind.

"I'll get it yet, perhaps," he remarked. "If we have a scrimmage with them fellers I'll be on ther lookout for my knife."

The party kept on till the shades of night began to gather, every now and then halting and listening for sounds of pursuit.

But they heard none, and when they halted in a snug little glade, where a spring of pure water trickled down the rocks, they were half inclined to think that the men who had ambushed Charlie were not following them.

They had brought coffee, sugar and salt and a supply of corn bread with them, so a fire was started, and soon Cheyenne Charlie had his bear steaks sizzling over the coals.

The odor from the cooking meat and the coffee gave them all an appetite that made them feel like eating almost anything, and when they sat down to supper Charlie was not the only one who did full justice to the grizzly meat.

"It are a little tough, but it is mighty good," Jack observed.

The horses were hobbled where there was plenty of good grass, and then our friends got ready to pass the night.

It was decided that no more than three of them should go to sleep at one time, as it was strictly necessary that a sharp watch must be kept.

It fell to the lot of Robedee and Lively Rick to take the first turn, and about an hour after supper the others turned in.

At the end of four hours Wild and Charlie got up and took the place of the others, leaving Jim sleeping as soundly as though he was in his bed at Weston.

It was not long before the peculiar cry of some night bird, or rather a good imitation of one, came to the ears of the two on guard.

"Get the horses in behind that pile of rocks, Charlie," Wild whispered to his companion, as he heard an answering cry from a different direction. "There is something up."

The scout unhobbled them and obeyed without any loss of time.

They were now in a very good place to resist an attack, if one should be made.

Wild knew that they could hold the place against a dozen, and he was not the least bit worried.

Again and again the cries of the night bird came to their ears, and at the end of perhaps twenty minutes some small stones and loosened dirt came rattling down the cliff in front of them.

Wild peered upward from behind the boulder he had

chosen to shield himself with, and in the dim starlight he caught sight of the figure of a man lying on his stomach and peering over the brink of the cliff.

He did not shoot, but simply waited.

Pretty soon he saw the man rise to his feet and get back out of sight.

Five minutes later he saw three of them show up near the edge of the cliff, and then his face turned pale, for they were rolling a big stone to send it crashing down upon those in the camp.

He realized this very quickly, and his rifle flew to his shoulder.

Crack!

As the whip-like report rang out on the still night air, one of the villainous gang above uttered a cry of mortal agony and came tumbling down almost at the feet of the young dead-shot.

The others ran back out of sight, leaving the boulder at the edge of the cliff.

Wild's shot aroused the camp, and one word from him was sufficient to cause them to get out of danger.

They were not an instant too soon, either, for becoming desperate, the men above got behind the big stone and sent it crashing downward.

It narrowly missed one of the horses, but did no damage whatever.

"Steady, now, boys!" exclaimed Young Wild West, in a voice that was as cool as though he was going to sit down for a pleasant chat. "Keep your eyes above, and whenever you see a man you know what to do."

And they all did know what to do, too. The men above them were trying to take their lives, and they felt in duty bound to prevent them, if they could, by faking theirs.

In less than ten seconds after Young Wild West made the remark, Cheyenne Charlie's rifle spoke.

And with the report, another scoundrel went before his Maker.

There was no way to tell how many there was of them, and they did not know but that some of them might come upon them from another direction; but one thing was certain, Young Wild West did not grow the least bit alarmed over the possible outcome of the affair.

He was one of the kind who never believe in the word fail.

Our friends had now drawn back into a position where it was impossible for any boulders or stones to be rolled upon them, and when their young leader began to talk jokingly, they felt perfectly at their ease.

Half an hour passed without hearing anything more of their enemies.

Then our hero began to grow just a trifle nervous.

"Boys," said he, after a lengthy silence, "I guess I will go out on a little scout. I want to see who our enemies are and learn how many they number."

"You ain't goin' to risk it, are you, Wild?" Cheyenne Charlie questioned, as though he thought it would not be the proper thing to do.

"Yes; I am going to risk it. I will go alone, and then if anything happens it will all fall upon me. I have done as risky things before, I think. From what I have already seen of these fellows, there is nothing brilliant about them. They have already lost two men, where they shouldn't have lost any, if they had worked their cards anywhere near right. If such a gang as that gets the best of me I will be willing to quit calling myself a scout."

That settled it. Not another word was said.

Wild soon got himself in readiness to leave the camp.

He simply laid aside his rifle and examined his brace of revolvers to make sure that they were in perfect order and ready for instant use.

"Now, boys, lay low and keep your eyes peeled," was all he said.

Then he quietly crawled away under the shadow of the trees in the little glade.

As expert as he was, Wild never allowed himself to get the least bit careless in his movements.

He worked his way along as though it was a matter of life or death to him; as though the crackling of a single twig meant that he would be lost.

It was rather tedious work, to be sure, but he was used to it, and minded it but little.

Even if he was to find a light suddenly turned upon him and a dozen revolvers pointed at him he would not have quailed, but would undoubtedly have got in the first shot.

And that first shot would possibly have meant victory for him.

Nerve is a thing most essential to persons who run great risks.

Slowly, but surely, the daring young scout worked his way from the camp.

In about three minutes he came to the point where he would have to crawl upward over the rocks.

Up he went as silently as a snail working its way from the bottom of a well.

He was gradually drawing nearer to the place where his enemies were located.

Never once did he think of failing to gain his point. Nay! He had already made up his mind that if there was not more than half a dozen of them he would tackle them single handed.

In ten minutes from the time he left the camp he was at the top of the cliff.

The many nooks and crannies that were there suited his purpose admirably.

He worked his way along, stopping at almost every foot, until presently he heard whispering voices.

Then he crouched down flat to the ground, and listened.

"It won't do to go down there in the dark," he heard one man say. "They would mow us down before we could get at them."

"Let's wait till daylight, then, and pick 'em off from the cover we've got here," said another.

"That is the only thing we have got to do," spoke up a third. "We must get hold of that tobacco pouch that red-

skin girl took to Young Wild West. There is a fortune in it for the seven of us that's left out of the nine."

Wild nodded to himself when he heard this.

It was no other than Hickory Hipe, the outlaw, who had spoken last.

"So you are after the legacy old Gray Elk left me, are you?" he muttered under his breath. "Well, I'll guarantee that you will never get it—not even if I should go under, for I left the piece of parchment with Arietta, my promised bride."

The boy could not help smiling there in the darkness as he thought of this.

He had committed the Indian writing to memory, so there was no need of his bringing the parchment along.

He meant to keep that in memory of the old chief who had died with a spark of gratitude in his breast.

He remained there for ten minutes longer, and then being thoroughly satisfied that the villains meant to remain there till daylight, he started to make his way back to the camp.

He knew now that he and his friends would be perfectly safe till daybreak.

That is, of course, if they stayed there.

But Young Wild West did not intend to stay there in the little glade.

He had already decided upon a plan of action.

As cautiously as he had come he made his way back, though it was hardly necessary, and soon he crawled right into the camp before those waiting for him were aware of it.

He had been gone just a half hour.

"Whew!" exclaimed Lively Rick, in a hoarse whisper, when Wild appeared before them. "You are a wonder, you are. I'll bet there ain't another man livin' as could have got here without us knowin' it."

"I must say that I caught you all napping," was the reply. "You should keep your ears open."

"We did have 'em open, but you never made a sound," answered Charlie, shaking his head as though he was angered at himself for not having heard his friend's approach.

"Well, I have found out all we want to know, I guess."

"How many of 'em are there?" queried Jim.

"Seven; and their leader is Hickory Hipe."

"What!"

"And they are following us for the purpose of getting the legacy Gray Elk left me."

"Get out!"

"Yes. The outlaw leader seems to know just what Tripping Fawn, the Indian maiden, brought me the night before last."

This news was astonishing to them, and they could not help thinking that they were very lucky mortals to have such a brilliant leader as Young Wild West.

"Now, then," resumed Wild, "we are going to leave this place one at a time. Lively, you get your horse and go first. Go straight south and wait half a mile below."

Without waiting for anything further, Lively started to obey.

In a few minutes he had got away from the camp without making any noise to speak of.

Then the rest followed one at a time, Wild being the last one to leave, and finally the camp was deserted.

And all unconscious of what had taken place, Hickory Hipe and his villainous gang remained upon the cliff, waiting for the light of day to come, so they could pick off the men they followed from behind the rocks.

CHAPTER IX.

THE OUTLAWS TAKE IN THE FIRST TRICK.

Our friends rode along for about two miles after they met, and then Wild picked out a suitable place, and they went into camp once more.

"We won't be bothered any more by those fellows tonight," he observed, "so get all the sleep you can. We will settle accounts with Mr. Hickory Hipe in the daylight tomorrow."

All hands now felt perfectly at ease, and soon those who were not on guard were wrapped in the arms of Morpheus.

The place they had chosen to remain the balance of the night was on a gentle slope about two hundred yards from the trail.

There was quite a thick growth of stunted oaks there, so they were pretty secure from observation.

Shortly after dawn Wild climbed one of the tallest trees and took a look around.

He could see the spot where they had camped in the early part of the evening quite plainly.

But the cliff where the outlaws were could not be discerned, owing to a high projection this side of it.

The boy had not been up in the tree long when he saw moving figures on the trail near their old camp.

"They have discovered that we are missing," he thought, "and they are coming this way."

Wild waited long enough to make sure that he was right in his supposition, and then descended the tree.

"We will move on at once, I guess," he said. "The outlaws are moving this way. We will go on till we strike a place where there is water and grass and then go into camp. We can be on the lookout for them when they come along and make it hot for them."

Those who were still sleeping were aroused in short order, and then the party mounted and rode away to the south.

The trail was in a pretty fair condition for riding, so they kicked up quite a smart pace.

Before five miles had been covered they came to a spot that could not have suited them better for a camping place if it had been made to order.

Both grass and water were there, and it was so situated that no one could well approach it without being easily seen.

"Now I guess we can take things a little easy," observed Jack Robedee. "I know what I am going to do."

"What are you going to do?" inquired Lively Rick.

"I'm goin' to try fishin' in that stream. It looks to me as though there were trout there."

"Well, maybe there be, but I reckon you've got all ther fish now that you'll catch."

"Just wait an' see," and Robedee went to his saddlebags and soon produced a hook and line.

Then, while the rest were attending to the horses and fixing things up in general, he cut a rod and dug up some angle worms.

A few minutes later he was seated on a rock near the spot where the current of the mountain stream ran the swiftest.

He had scarcely cast his line in than he got a bite, and, much to the surprise of Lively Rick, who had followed him out of curiosity, he landed a good-sized fish.

"Whew!" exclaimed Lively.

"I told you so;" and then Jack calmly landed another, which was much larger than the first.

He had great luck for the next ten minutes, catching eighteen fish.

Then they ceased to bite.

But Robedee was satisfied. He did not believe in catching any more than he could use, anyway, so he gave it up and started in to help Lively clean them.

Charlie had started a fire, and when he saw the fish brought in and deposited on the grass, he stared in amazement.

"How will they go for breakfast?" asked Jack, with a grin.

"Fine. Hello, Wild and Jim! come over and see what Jack has been doing."

The boys who were keeping watch up the trail for the appearance of the outlaws promptly walked to the fire.

They did not know that Jack had been fishing, and, of course, were agreeably surprised when they saw his catch.

The eighteen fish would easily weigh ten pounds, so that made ample enough to cook for their breakfast.

The fish were soon prepared and the coffee put on, and then all they had to do was to wait.

Meanwhile Wild was seeing to it that a good watch was being kept in every direction.

He knew Hickory Hipe was a very reckless scoundrel, and there was no telling what move he might make.

But the minutes flitted by and the gang failed to put in an appearance.

"I know what is the matter," said Wild. "They have seen the smoke from our fire, and have halted to talk matters over, or else go into camp, the same as we have."

"That's right," answered Jim. "They have gone into camp. See that thin column of smoke going up over there."

"Yes. They are burning the lightest kind of wood, so their fire won't make much smoke. I wonder what they think we are? As if we couldn't see a column of smoke, no matter how thin it was!"

The Prince of the Saddle laughed at the thought.

He was not afraid of their camp being found by their

enemies, and a fire had been started just the same as if they had been out for sport, and no danger lurking near.

But the outlaws were making a miserable attempt to conceal their movements.

Our friends took their time and enjoyed their breakfast.

After they had eaten to their full desire pipes and cheeroots were lighted, and then they made ready to resume their journey to the three peaks.

According to the parchment they ought to reach the place by nightfall, as the sun would have risen and set twice since they started by that time.

They kept on at a good pace when they once got started, Wild riding well in the rear, on the lookout for their enemies.

He was not going to allow them to make a sudden rush from the rear and give them a volley before they could get to cover.

The boy depended on his experience as a scout to prevent them from doing that.

Nothing was seen of Hickory Hipe and his gang, however, and when noon came our friends halted for the usual rest and refreshment.

Charlie and Lively Rick had been fortunate enough to shoot some game on the way, so there was a prospect of having a good dinner.

While it was being cooked, Wild, who was walking round the camp, rifle in hand, suddenly saw a man approaching holding up a stick to which a white rag was tied.

"A flag of truce!" he exclaimed; and then he waited to see what was coming.

The others had seen it by this time, but only Jim walked over to where his chum was standing.

The man who was approaching was a hang-dog-looking fellow, and he seemed to be rather timid about coming to them.

"Come right on; don't be afraid," called out Wild. "You don't suppose we would lift a gun against you when you are holding up a white rag, do you? We are not built that way, if you and your gang are. What's wanted, anyway?"

"I've got a note for yer," replied the man, as he came forward uneasily.

"Fetch it along."

The fellow did so.

Young Wild West unfolded a piece of greasy paper that had been torn from a note-book and read the following:

"To Young Wild West and his friends: Warning!

"We know the mission you are on, and warn you to turn back at once. If you persist in going after Gray Elk's legacy we will see to it that you will never return to Weston alive. We will force you along till we get you where we want you, and then kill you off at our leisure. You think we cannot do this, but fail to turn back and you will see.

(Signed)

"Dick Spruce,

"Hickory Hipe."

"Whew!" whistled Wild; "so our friend, the gambler, is with the gang, is he? Well, I am real glad to learn that.

Now, then, Mr. Messenger, I will write an answer, which you can take back to your friends with my compliments."

Jack had part of a note-book in his saddlebags, and as soon as he produced it Wild sat down on a stone and wrote the following reply to the note:

"To Dick Spruce, Hickory Hipe, and all the other loafers in the gang:

"I am going straight ahead with my friends, and we are going to get the legacy Gray Elk left me. As you have warned me, I now tell you that unless you keep away from us you will be riddled with lead pills before the rise and set of another sun. I am not like such as you, for I always keep my word.

Yours,

"YOUNG WILD WEST."

The boy folded this and handed it to the messenger.

"Tell them to read this carefully," was all he said, and away went the man acting as though he was very glad to get out of the presence of Young Wild West and his friends.

"Now, then, boys, we will wait a little while and see if they are going to attack us right away. I hope they are, for I would like to have this thing over with."

"So would I," nodded Jim. "I don't get what you might call nervous, but I don't like waiting in such cases as this. If we have got to fight, why, I say fight as soon as possible."

"Well, it wouldn't be policy for us to attack them, unless we caught them somewhere in the open."

"I know that. Let them do the attacking, and let them do it as soon as they want to."

At the end of half an hour, as they saw nothing of the outlaws, the party in search of the Indian chief's legacy resumed their journey.

"Take it easy, boys, and keep a sharp watch," said Wild. "It may be that we will get a chance to pick one or two of them off on the way."

They were all waiting for just such an opportunity, and Lively Rick was the first to get it.

He caught a glimpse of a man sneaking across an open space with a big tin flask in his hand.

He was going for water, but he never got it, for the rifle of the man from Devil Creek spoke, and the outlaw rolled over on the ground with a bullet in his brain.

"That leaves six," said Wild, with a nod of satisfaction. "That was a pretty good shot, Lively."

"I think I'm improv'in' somewhat since I got acquainted with you," was the reply. "I noticed how cool you always are when you go to fire. I guess it is coolness what does the business."

"Coolness counts every time. Every one ought to know that, no matter what they are going to do. The minute a man gets excited he is bound to make a mistake."

Being quite sure that they would see no more of the outlaws for a while, our friends mounted their horses and rode on down the rough and irregular trail.

Nothing occurred to mar the peacefulness of their journey, except the killing of another grizzly by Cheyenne Char-

lie, and about five in the afternoon they found themselves at the foot of three narrow, towering peaks.

And there was the waterfall and the broken tree right before them.

Gray Elk had not written falsely.

"We are here, boys," exclaimed Young Wild West. "Now, the first thing to be done is to fix up a camp that we will be able to hold against a score, if it should become necessary. We have to remain here a week, as we don't know where the gold Gray Elk mentioned in his letter really is."

"We'll find it all right, I guess," retorted Jack. "What do you say if we roll some of these rocks against the fallen tree and form a kinder breastworks?"

"That will do, I think," nodded our hero.

That was enough to spur them on to work.

As soon as they had given the horses the full length of their lariats, they started in with a vim.

It was heavy work, but they kept on till they had piled up rocks and boulders till it resembled a miniature fort.

They could not have found a better place to stand a siege if they had hunted the mountains over.

The three towering peaks ran up so straight that it was utterly impossible for even a goat to climb them, so there could come no danger from the rear.

And in the front they had formed the circular barricade, leaving the rushing torrent that fell from the rocks above on the left and an opening to go in and out on the right.

The next thing in order was to start a fire, and this was soon done.

By the time supper was ready it was dark, but as they had already arranged their pickets they felt safe enough.

The thought of finding a pile of golden treasure, and the fact that there were six outlaws thirsting for their blood caused a feeling of more or less excitement to prevail among our friends.

Wild decided that they would make no effort to find the treasure until morning.

They were pretty well tired out and needed what rest the outlaws might be willing to give them.

Though they expected to be attacked before morning, no such thing happened, and shortly after the sun came up they were hustling to get their breakfast and start in on the hunt for the treasure.

Charlie and Jim wanted to take a scout around the vicinity to see where the outlaws were located, so Wild told them to go ahead.

The two left at once.

They went off to the right, intending to make a circle back to the camp.

Both were experienced in this sort of business, as the reader knows, and they worked their way along with the utmost caution.

When they were a distance of perhaps three hundred yards from camp, Jim began to sniff the air.

"Smell anything?" asked Cheyenne, in a whisper.

"Coffee," was the reply. "It don't come from our camp, either, because the wind is not the right way."

"That's right. There! I smell it, too. Them fellers are around close by. Funny we can't see any smoke from their fire, though."

"I wonder if they ain't in that ravine over there? If they are the smoke from their fire would get lost before it got up here."

"That's just it. I'll bet a plug of tobacker that they are there!"

"Well, we'll soon find out," and Jim began moving along in the direction of the ravine.

In a few minutes they were at a spot where they could look down into the ravine with the greatest of ease.

It did not take them a second to catch sight of the camp of the men almost directly below them.

There were four of the men sitting down eating near the embers of a fire, and one was walking around smoking his pipe, with a rifle resting in the hollow of his arm.

The other two belonging to the party were nowhere to be seen.

"One of those fellows is the man I shot in the arm over at the Gazoo," whispered Jim. "I never saw the other three; they are strangers."

"I wonder where Hickory Hipe an' Spruce are?" retorted Charlie.

"Probably scouting around, the same as we are."

"I s'pose so. Say, Jim!"

"What?" asked the boy, looking in surprise at the rather queer expression that was on his companion's face.

"See that big bowlder there?"

"Yes," and Dart shrugged his shoulders.

"If that was shoved over it would just about strike in ther embers of that fire below us!"

"I know that, Charlie. According to my judgment it would mash those three men into a jelly."

"I don't s'pose it ought to be done; but they'd do it to us if they got ther chance."

"I know they would. But we couldn't do a thing like that. It would be real murder to do it."

"You are right it would be murder, so you had better not do it!" exclaimed a voice behind them, and turning, they found Hickory Hipe and Dick Spruce standing over them with leveled revolvers.

"Nipped! by jingo!" cried Cheyenne Charlie, sliding his hand for his revolver.

"Don't touch it, or I'll blow you to kingdom come!" said Spruce, thrusting his weapon within six inches of the scout's face.

Charlie knew perfectly well that the villain had the drop on him, so he remained quiet.

"Put your hands behind you!" commanded the outlaw captain. "Hurry up, now! We are not in the humor to fool with you. Ther better you mind what we say ther longer you'll live."

Both our friends were believers in the time-honored saying that "while there is life there is hope," so they submitted to being captured.

Being a prisoner was much better than being dead.

A prisoner doomed to die did not always die, but a dead man never came back.

That was the logic of the situation, and both Jim and Cheyenne realized it only too well.

In a very short time the hands of the two were securely tied behind their backs and their weapons taken from them.

Then Hickory Hipe ordered them to rise to their feet.

They did this soon enough, and then they were conducted back into the bushes and thence down a winding descent to the ravine below.

When the two villains marched up the ravine with their prisoners, the three men sprang up from around the fire and uttered yells of approval.

That was where they made a mistake, but none of them seemed to realize it.

CHAPTER X.

THE INDIAN CHIEF'S LEGACY.

As soon as Jim and Charlie had gone Young Wild West began to make a thorough examination of the place.

"The gold, if there really is any, must be right here somewhere," he said, putting his foot on the ground near the butt of the fallen tree. "This is the nearest point to the little water-fall, and according to Gray Elk's description, that is where it is supposed to be located."

"Let's dig a little and find out," suggested Jack Robedee.

"That's it," spoke up Lively Rick, and he picked up one of the picks they had brought with them.

"Dig right here, Lively," said Wild, making a mark on the ground with the heel of his boot.

Rick struck in, and as soon as he had broken the hard dirt a little Jack brought a shovel and started in.

Young Wild West was doing two things now.

He was watching his two friends work, and at the same time keeping his eyes "peeled" for some signs of the outlaws.

Five minutes later he suddenly heard a faint cheering in the distance.

It was very faint at the first sound, but when the echoes began to sound it was as plain as though it came from some one not over a hundred yards away.

"Stop!" cried Wild to the two men who were digging. "Something has happened to Jim and Charlie."

"What do you mean?" gasped Jack, who had not heard the sounds.

"I just heard some one cheering as though they were delighted at something. It could not have been our boys, you know."

"No; it ain't likely it was them," admitted Robedee.

"Then it must have been Hickory Hipe's gang; they are the only people around here that we know of, except ourselves."

"That's so."

"Well, you two just keep a watch on the camp and the

horses; don't do any more work till I come back. I am going to see what caused that cheering."

That was all he said, and the next moment he was making for the direction he judged the sounds had come from.

Wild was very anxious, and he made his way along as fast as he could.

He made no mistake in judging the direction, and in a very short time he had reached the point where the capture of Jim and Charlie had taken place.

He had nothing to go by, as the ground was so hard here that there were no traces of any one having been there, but when he had listened for a minute he heard the unmistakable sound of voices from below.

Then he simply crawled to the edge of the ravine and peered over.

He gave a start, for the sight that met his gaze was certainly surprising.

Standing on the ground beneath a gnarled tree were Jim and Charlie, their hands tied behind them, and the six outlaws were gathered around them arguing over something.

He looked for a way to get down to the ravine, and soon found one.

In less than a minute he had reached a point that was nearly on a level with the group, and less than a hundred yards distant from them.

He now saw that the villains had decided to hang their prisoners.

The outlaws seemed to have only one lariat to spare, for they made a noose and placed it around the neck of Cheyenne Charlie, evidently intending to hang him first, and then cut him down and give Jim his dose.

The end of the lariat was thrown over a limb, and then the men made ready to launch the brave scout into eternity.

But Young Wild West already had his rifle leveled, and when the rope tightened about the neck of Charlie it cracked.

It was certainly a remarkable shot, for the lariat was severed a foot above the scout's head, and the sudden release caused him to drop in a heap to the ground.

At the report two of the men made a dash for cover, and reached it.

They were the leading spirits of the gang, too.

Then four shots rang out in rapid succession, and as many of the outlaws dropped to the ground, either dead or mortally wounded.

With his smoking rifle in his hands, Young Wild West came dashing to the spot.

"Just in time, old fellow!" cried Jim, with a joyful look on his pale face.

"There is no mistake about that," answered Wild, as he quickly severed the bonds of his two friends with his sharp hunting knife.

Charlie had been choked just enough to make it difficult for him to speak, but as soon as he could he exclaimed fervently:

"Thank you, Wild. Anna came mighty near being a widow that time. And look what a disgrace it would have

been upon her—her husband hanged by a miserable gang of outlaws!"

"Well, I don't think any of these four will ever try to hang anybody again," was the reply. "I kept my nerve and gave every one of them a bullet in the right spot. Now for Hickory Hipe and Dick Spruce!"

"They couldn't have got very far," said Jim.

"I don't know about that; they were running like deers when they struck cover. I must admit that they moved altogether too quick for me, for I had hardly sent the bullet that cut the rope when they leaped away."

"How did you come to know we were here?"

"I heard a great cheering."

"That cheering was from those fellows when we were marched into the ravine with our hands tied behind our backs."

Dart pointed to the four bodies on the ground as he spoke.

"Well, come on!" exclaimed Wild. "If we want to find the other two we had better get at it. We will come back and bury these carcasses later. I wonder where the horses of the gang are?"

He pushed his way through a clump of bushes, revolver in hand, and then suddenly saw the horses grazing on a big patch of luxuriant grass.

There were four of them there, which told the story that in running away the two villains had taken the other two.

"Here are four pretty good horses with no one to ride them," observed Charlie. "I s'pose we had better turn 'em loose."

"Certainly."

This was done, and then the trail of the two that had been ridden off by the escaping scoundrels was found.

It ran along to the other end of the ravine half a mile away, and then turned to the north.

"I guess they have got enough of us," said Young Wild West. "They have taken the back track, and that speaks volumes in a case of this kind."

There was no use in following the men just then; they had other more important business on hand, so they turned and went back to camp.

Jack and Lively were very much relieved when they saw their three companions returning, and when they had listened to the story of the narrow escape of Charlie and Jim they felt so good at seeing them alive that they gave them a hearty handshake.

"Jack, you and Lively can take a couple of shovels and go over to the ravine and bury the fellows I was compelled to shoot," remarked Wild, a few minutes later. "Charlie can go with you, for I guess he needs a little exercise to get his blood in circulation. His wind was pretty nearly shut off when I cut him down with a bullet."

"That's just what's the matter," laughed the scout. "I do need a little exercise, so I will pilot the boys to the ravine and let them bury the coyotes, while I look on."

The three hurried off without the least hesitation to the rather grewsome task assigned to them.

Wild and Jim set in to digging for the gold, both feeling that they were not likely to be disturbed again.

About a foot down they found a slab of rock, and then they thought they had surely found what they were looking for.

But they were disappointed, for when they had pried the slab up they found nothing but plain, ordinary dirt.

"There is one thing certain," said our hero, in a hopeful tone, "that slab was put there by hands, and that being the case, it must have been put there for a purpose. I am going to dig down a few feet farther if it takes a week."

"That's the way to talk!" exclaimed his chum. "Like you, I am of the opinion that we have struck the right place."

When they had dug another foot they came to a big stone which would require considerable labor to remove.

The hole would have to be enlarged so it could be shifted.

For over half an hour the two worked at it, and then as they saw their three companions coming back they gave it up for a while.

"Ther cusses are all buried," said Cheyenne Charlie, "an' I found my knife in ther belt of one of 'em. That makes me glad that I went along."

"Good!" answered Wild. "Now, come here and see what you can do in the way of digging up rocks."

"What do you want to git that stone out for?" he asked, as he peered into the hole.

"Because I think there is something under it that is worth digging for."

"All right, then, but it seems to me that we might dig in some other place jest as well. We don't know where ther gold is, if there is any."

"It is under this stone, I am pretty sure of that. See the slab that we dug up before we struck the stone."

Charlie made an examination of the stone slab, and then nodded. "That's all right," he said. "That looks as though it was cut to fit something."

Then all hands began digging, and under their united efforts the dirt began to fly with a vengeance.

In a few minutes the big stone was taken out, and then the digging was comparatively easy again.

They had enlarged the hole to about the size of an ordinary grave, and when they were about six feet down they found that it was a grave.

They had struck human bones, sure enough.

"Your legacy is one of Gray Elk's ancestors, I guess," remarked Jim Dart, with a laugh.

"Don't laugh," was the retort. "We will take the skeleton out, just for curiosity's sake. That may not be the only thing in the grave, you know."

"You think just the same as I do, Wild," said Cheyenne Charlie. "Ah, the old fellow is fallin' apart!"

The skeleton, which was surely that of an Indian, had been there a long time, and when the scout took hold of it the bones fell to pieces.

While he was scraping away with his shovel he suddenly

discovered another slab of stone, much smaller than the first one they unearthed.

It was but the work of a minute for him to pry this up, and when he did remove it he jumped bolt upright, and exclaimed:

"Gee-whiz! Look there!"

In the bottom of the grave was an earthen pot of ancient manufacture filled to the brim with a glistening mass of golden coins.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

"That is something well worth digging for, I think," cried Young Wild West, when he had recovered from his surprise.

"Whew!" exclaimed Jim Dart. "I can scarcely believe my eyes."

"But ther money is here, jest ther same," said Cheyenne Charlie. "What a lucky feller you are, Wild!"

Charlie insisted on having the privilege of digging around the earthen pot so it could be lifted out.

When it had been placed on the surface of the ground, all hands proceeded to make an examination of it.

The coins were all alike—five-dollar gold pieces, bearing the date of 1855, with the stamp of a California mining company on them.

They had never been in circulation, as the looks of them plainly indicated.

How the coins had come to be buried there in that wild spot beneath the body of an Indian warrior was a mystery.

Our friends had various opinions on the matter, but finally they gave it up.

"Well, boys, there is no use bothering our heads as to how this money got here," said Wild, after a silence had reigned for perhaps a minute. "It is here, and that is the best part of it. Now, then, we will cover up the bones, and then divide the coins into five parts."

The division then took place, and each found himself the possessor of a modest little fortune, though in those days in the Black Hills such sums would not have counted for a great lot.

As there was nothing to keep them there, our friends decided to start for Weston at once.

It did not take them long to pack up, and one hour later they left the three peaks and the fallen tree and the waterfall behind them.

They were very much elated over the result of their two days' journey.

"I am sorry those fellows interfered with us," said Wild, as they rode along. "But I suppose they couldn't help it. It is the nature of such men as Hickory Hipe and Dick Spruce to do wrong to their fellow-creatures, and as they may do more murdering and plundering, the sooner they are wiped out the better it will be. Boys, it runs in my head

that we will come across them before we get back to Weston."

"It strikes me that way, too," spoke up Lively, who was bound to make it known that he agreed with everything the young dead-shot said.

Cheyenne Charlie felt of his neck where the rope had tightened upon it, and nodded his head significantly.

"Wild," said he, "I hope—I hope——"

"You hope what?" asked Wild, knowing well what he meant.

"Well, I hope you will give me the chance to fire the first shot if we do come across ther miserable coyotes."

"All right. I will give you my word that I will."

They rode on till darkness overtook them, and then after a short consultation concluded to keep on till they got to the place where they had last camped before reaching the three peaks.

As they reached the spot an hour or so later Cheyenne Charlie caught the gleam of a camp fire.

"I guess we have found 'em," he said.

"Halt and dismount," remarked Wild, in a low tone.

He tied his horse to a tree, and the others followed suit.

"Now we will see who is camping there," he said, coolly.

"They made their way softly along for a few yards and then reached a point where they could see the brightly burning fire.

Before it sat two men, smoking pipes and playing cards with a time-worn pack.

Cheyenne Charlie raised his rifle to his shoulder, but dropped it again instantly.

The two men were the ones he was looking for, but he did not have the heart to drop them in cold blood.

Motioning his friends to stay where they were, he stepped boldly forward where the outlaws could see him and let out a yell that caused them to grab their rifles and spring to their feet.

The whip-like report of Charlie's rifle rang out, and Dick Spruce, who was in the act of firing at him, fell to the ground dead.

Hickory Hipe threw down his rifle and held up his hands.

"That won't do!" cried the scout, speaking in a hoarse tone that was full of meaning. "You've got to fight, Hickory Hipe. I've heard you brag that nothing could scare you, so now you've got to fight. How will you have it?"

The outlaw's face was as pale as death, and he trembled slightly as he stepped forward and drew the ugly looking knife from his belt.

"Well, if I've got to fight, I'll take my chance with my bowie," he said. "Ther game is all played but ther last trick, an' if I take that in I want to be allowed to go."

"You kin go if you take ther trick," answered the scout, with something like a chuckle. "Now, then, are you ready?"

The two men stepped into the firelight, one each side of the body of the dead gambler.

Cheyenne Charlie was earnest and confident, and the outlaw was trembling and fearful.

Without another word the two knives came together.

Clash! Clash!

The sparks flew from the tempered steel like the sizzling of dampened powder, and even Young Wild West became spellbound for a moment.

The scout was more than anxious to kill the scoundrel he was battling with, but he did not lose a bit of the caution he possessed. He jumped nimbly about and parried the savage thrusts made at him with the greatest of ease.

Hickory Hipe was growing desperate.

He realized that he had no chance by attempting to be scientific, so he rushed in to do or die.

And he died!

Cheyenne Charlie took a quick step to the right; his glistening blade was raised, a dull thud, and the heart of the outlaw was severed in twain!

"Let the carrion lay where it is," the scout remarked, as he wiped his knife on the shirt of the dead gambler and walked to where his friends were standing. "I have had my revenge, and I am satisfied."

"We will bury them," said Wild. "You need not help, though. Jack, how about it?"

"With ther greatest of pleasure," was the reply. "I'd like to be able to bury all such miserable scoundrels as them two was."

The camp fire was all lighted for them, so after the bodies had been covered up, they washed the dust of their journey from them and prepared a late supper.

The next morning they got up and resumed their way to Weston.

No one interfered with them after that during the trip, and in due time they reached home.

"Well," said pretty Arietta Murdock, when she had listened to Wild's story of the adventures that befell them on their trip to the three peaks and back, "I suppose you will settle down for good now, won't you?"

"I can't promise you that, little one," was the laughing reply. "There is a whole lot for me to do in this world yet, I think."

And so there was, as will be told later.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST MISSING; OR, SAVED BY AN INDIAN PRINCESS," which will be the next number (8) of the "Wild West Weekly."

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